

THE ARGOSY.

OCTOBER, 1899.

THE TOWER GARDENS.

BY L. ALDRIDGE.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.

TOWARDS the end of the week in which the matrons met, the dismal weather culminated in a curious orange-brown day. On that day the whole of London looked so like a painting by a very old master that it was difficult to believe it was not on canvas. In every open space, in Fenchurch Avenue, for instance, a symphony in brown was in progress, beginning near the ground in a key-note, so to put it, of the very deepest, most intense tone, and working upwards, through perfect but almost imperceptible gradations, to the tawny zenith where the mid-day sun was in vain trying to penetrate the semi-opaque clouds.

From an artistic point of view this day was not without its merits ; but Arthur Bayliss stood at his door-way for an instant and shuddered at it.

"Heavens ! what a climate !" he said. " If this is July what will November be ? I shan't be able to stand it. I shall have to go. Ugh ! ugh ! ugh ! How the cold is running down my spine ! "

And he retired to his office fire, where he was speedily joined by Mr. Tildesley, who, having just made a considerable loss, was in a state of mind sufficiently depressing ; but Arthur Bayliss rather liked a good growl on such a day.

The symphony could be well observed from the house on Tower Hill ; but there it was accompanied by a constant boo-oo-oohing from the fog horns on the river, a never-ceasing shrieking of railway whistles, and the excruciating voice of the last invented steam Syren, or "American devil," and such damp clamminess on chairs, tables and walls that really, to most people, life there would indeed seem hardly worth living.

Singular to relate, however, Mrs. Bayliss, who was, it must be owned, rarely in tune with her fellow-creatures, was, on that orange-brown day, when most other people were so wretched, in an exceptionally happy temper.

One cause of that good temper was, that she had that morning received a note from her brother, John Harbuckle, in which he informed her that he might be expected home about five o'clock that afternoon.

"I told you," he wrote, "that a week at the sea-side would kill me. I have been obliged to stay here five days; I leave you to imagine the deplorable condition to which I am now reduced. I shall require the tenderest handling on my return. The treatment to which the ivories found at Nimroud were subjected might perhaps be useful in my case: they had to boil them in isinglass before examining them, so fragile were they. I feel almost as fragile."

"Serve him right!" said Mary. "He wouldn't take *us* to the sea-side. Really it seems like a judgment!"

But Mary Bayliss was glad in her heart that her brother was coming back: not that she was so particularly pleased with the idea of seeing him again as that she hated a house without a man in it.

Of course, she never admitted this to her masculine relatives—what woman ever did?—because, as we all know, men are conceited enough without being told such things, and never ought to be flattered; but to her a house appeared unfurnished without a man in it. She could, and, what is more, she did, at times neglect or snub her men cruelly, when she was out of temper with them, or thought that they required stern discipline, but there was nothing on earth she really enjoyed so much as looking after them thoroughly well.

She had parted with her brother very coldly indeed; still, although there had been Arthur Bayliss to fuss about, she had often felt that she missed her other man—the one who stayed. Arthur Bayliss had many attractions, but he went; he rarely took more than one meal with them. Do you know that, as I write this, I almost tremble for the widow's constancy to the memory of the late lamented Captain James Bayliss! That, however, is a contingency too horrible to contemplate. I won't contemplate it.

Mrs. Bayliss was just then in domestic difficulties; she was a woman capable both of creating difficulties and fighting them when created.

The present difficulty was that Mrs. Robbins was now without a successor, or, to put it plainly, Mrs. Bayliss was without a cook. This made it necessary for the girls and Mary to turn to and carry out their own orders, and added so much to the happiness of the household, that, in spite of the symphony and the Syrens, Alison and Jessie sang at their work, or laughed and chatted, and were

very merry ; the remembrance of Mrs. Carruthers and her knitting notwithstanding.

But then Jessie had had a very nice note from Mac that morning, in which Mac wrote that he hoped soon to be able to get down to Trinity Square, and have a little turn in the Tower Gardens.

By the train he had specified John Harbuckle arrived in town, to find, although it was early in the afternoon, that gas was burning in all the shops.

John Harbuckle's delight at again being in his dear City was so great, that, although he had with him a small portmanteau, he set out from the station on foot, for the purpose of enjoying the walk home, or, as one might say, with perhaps greater accuracy, of walking through his home ; so familiar and so beloved was the City to him, and so very much his own.

The interest he took in the details of all he saw was a source of very real pleasure to him. From a fresh notice on the hoardings to the opening of a new house, which had been finished during his absence, everything was full of interest to him.

He had gone some little distance when St. Paul's struck four.

"Ah!" he said, with a slightly regretful sigh, "he'll be round soon ; I should like a quiet hour before he comes ! Better take a cab."

He did so.

"I wonder if Mary's forgiven me yet," he said, as he was driven off. "On the whole, I get on better with Mary than I could have expected ; but she always was a trifle difficult—difficult and uncertain. I don't think she quite appreciates Alison, and that rather annoys me. I don't mean that she isn't fond of her, of course she is very fond of her, but she would rather, I think, that Alison wasn't quite so like her grandparents and was more of a Bayliss. Now to me there's a certain pleasure in seeing in her, just for an instant, the passing likeness of my father, or now and then of my mother ; once or twice, even, I have seen a likeness to my grandfather and to my little dead sister quite distinctly ; very interesting to me, this. I hope the girls are all right. All this worry has been rather too much for Jessie, I'm afraid ; I hope it's over. I'm very fond of Jessie—of both the dear girls. I wonder sometimes how I lived so contentedly without them. I hope they'll all like my little offerings. I'm not quite sure about that jet brooch for Mary. Really, it's bitterly cold for July ! How the trees have suffered ! How glad I am to be at home ! I do trust Mary will like the pattern of her brooch !—I should like to have done right for once, but I'm never certain about Mary."

At length, in spite of a terrible block in Eastcheap, he managed to get to Trinity Square.

He alighted. His door stood open ; he went into his office, where his old clerk was putting away the books, spoke to him for

a few minutes, read his letters, wrote an answer to one that required immediate attention, then went upstairs and gently opened the dining-room door, not without a secret nervousness and an indefinite anxiety.

But what a sight met his bewildered eyes ! There was the table laid out, by no menial hands, for the highest of high teas ; every bit of china that he had given to Mary and the girls turned to account in the most surprisingly delightful manner ; his blue pots and aspodistre on the sideboard, and, better than all, the dear girls themselves—who had never heard the cab, because of the traffic outside and their own activity within—the dear girls, flying towards him with outstretched arms ; and, more wonderful still, Mary, his sister, approaching with a good-humoured smile, evidently with intent to kiss him ! It was too much !

“ Why !—why !—why ! Dear !—dear !—dear ! ” stammered John Harbuckle. “ Really now, really ; I’m quite unprepared !—quite unprepared ! This is, indeed, too much. Let me sit down ! I shall faint ! ”

Then, there was nothing to be heard but :

“ Oh, Uncle John ! what a time you’ve been gone ! ” “ Oh, Uncle, John ! don’t you feel ashamed of yourself for not taking us ? ” “ Look at Jessie’s oat-cakes ! ” “ Look at Alison’s dropped scones ! Look at your Wedgwood tray ! ” “ Come and get warm !—aren’t you frozen ? ” “ Why !—why !—why ! Dear !—dear !—dear !—is that chair by the fire for me ? Well ! this is luxury ! What a Mormon I am ! ” “ Don’t talk like that, sir ! ” “ Oh, hasn’t it been a strange day ? ” “ And what do you think, Uncle John ? I went into twelve churches last Sunday morning ! ” “ And Mrs. Robbins’s department has lost its head again ! ” “ And tea’s quite ready, and ” “ Really !—really ! Let’s see what’s in my bag ! ” “ Oh, charming ! lovely !—the very thing I wanted !—a jet brooch, too !—and I broke mine this very morning ! What a coincidence ! ” “ Do you really like it, Mary ? ” “ I’ve been wanting that particular pattern all my life ! John, you certainly *do* know a good thing when you see it ! ”

Can you wonder that men are the creatures we know them to be when their women folk persist in burning incense to them in this—to use no harsher term—foolish and injudicious fashion ? Verily women have much to answer for !

If it had been possible to have spoiled John Harbuckle, he must inevitably have been ruined, totally ruined, that evening !

For a whole hour he had the undivided attention of three devoted women (is there anything on earth the domestic man enjoys so much ?) and was happy ; so happy, that his happiness seemed almost more than he could grasp ; so happy, that thanks to his Maker for letting him know such happiness welled up continually in his grateful heart and softened all his being.

He had one whole hour's start of Arthur Bayliss. He made good use of it.

When the illustrious Arthur Bayliss arrived, his heart, already heavy enough, was smitten with envy and jealousy; and he fancied, being in a state of body and mind when he could fancy any absurdity, that no one wanted him; and that even Jessie's welcome was forced and unreal.

They had finished tea and were all gathered round the fire; John Harbuckle in the great arm-chair, with one of the girls on each side of him, and Mary opposite, the old bachelor looking as if, indeed, in the bosom of his family and almost patriarchal.

Arthur Bayliss went up to his daughter and gave her a listless, weary kiss. He felt a horrible pang of jealousy.

"Well, Bayliss, how are you?" asked John Harbuckle, stretching out his hand in welcome; he could then afford to be extra kind, and addressed Bayliss in an easier tone than he had yet used to him.

"I'm just alive, that's all," returned Bayliss, gloomily. "You got her off, I suppose?" he added, taking a chair beside Mrs. Bayliss.

"Got her off this morning," returned John Harbuckle, and began a recital of his sufferings during the last week at Deal, and of the trouble he had had with the damaged ship.

But King Arthur's arrival put an end to the sole reign of King John, two of whose subjects at once contemplated the transfer of their loyalty; Mrs. Bayliss making fresh tea for the new sovereign, and Jessie preparing to take her chair from beside John Harbuckle's to the opposite corner, as soon as she could do so without too roughly wounding the feelings of the late autocrat.

Jessie, moved by a delicate feeling of consideration for the deposed monarch, remained where she was for a few minutes; and once, thoughtlessly enough, laid her hand on the arm of John Harbuckle's chair, to the intense disgust of Arthur Bayliss.

The two men were just then talking about the weather, on which subject Bayliss held most definite views; then Bayliss, after declaring that the climate was killing him, became so annoyed at seeing Jessie still by John Harbuckle's side that he could not help exclaiming:

"Why will you wear that bird's nest over your eyes, Jessie? For heaven's sake put it up; it makes me ill to look at you! She really is a sensible girl," he went on, addressing the others; "that makes it the greater pity she should disfigure herself as she does. She'll be blind one of these days."

Jessie put up the straggling ends of her hair, laughing, "There, father, will that do?" But she thought she would not be in any very great hurry to go to him, and allowed her aunt to pass him his tea; which unfilial conduct afflicted her father very deeply and made him feel that he was not wanted and had better go away.

"I think I'll go down into the office and do a little work," said John Harbuckle, rising; "I make it a rule not to attend to business

of an evening ; but I've been getting into arrears during my absence ; I must write some letters."

" May I come with you ? " said the loyal Alison. " I'll bring a book and be quiet. I'm so fond of the office."

" Thank you, my dear," said John Harbuckle, and he and his niece at once retired.

" The ridiculous manner in which you women fuss about a man when you have him all to yourselves ! " exclaimed Arthur Bayliss, contemptuously, as the occupants of the three remaining chairs drew them nearer to the fire.

" I dare say it's foolish, Arthur," said Mary Bayliss, with a sigh that was not quite all sad, " but you see it's what I've always been used to doing. If dear James was away for a day or two we always welcomed him back with a little festival ; didn't we, Jessie ? "

" We did ; and we had a grand one for you, father," said Jessie, " it cost us our cook. Her affections were in the military, and it was her evening out."

" That's no loss ; I can't help feeling that when a man's been out all day, especially such a day as this, he requires a little attention when he comes home," said Mrs. Bayliss.

" He does, indeed ! " said Arthur, with a reproachful sadness, meant to bring Jessie to repentance. " What then must he require after an eight years' absence ? "

Fortunately, before Mrs. Bayliss could reply, Sarah Jane called her away, leaving the unanswered question with Jessie.

Jessie, conscious that her father was trying to work upon her sympathies, gave him the benefit of her profile, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire without replying.

Her father looked at her with a sorrowful kind of anger, directed, he fancied, not against her, but against fate and circumstance.

" I've no right to complain, I've forfeited all such right," he said ; " but it's hard to leave one's daughter when her mind is a pure little mirror, reflecting only her parents' thoughts, and to come back and find that mind filled with other images. It is hard, but I suppose quite natural, that when one returns one should find one's own image —and that of the one that was dearer even than oneself—if not quite effaced, at any rate pale and blurred, and crossed and recrossed by lovers and aunts and cousins and—h'm!—adopted uncles"—this with an angry sniff and sneer.

" You don't mean to say you're jealous of poor Uncle John ? " asked Jessie, turning full upon him with a quick movement, her parted lips curving, her hazel eyes dancing with suppressed laughter.

" Jealous ! Pouff ! " exclaimed Arthur Bayliss ; " I'm not quite a fool, Jessie. I know I'm only one of the crowd now ; once I reigned supreme in a woman's heart, but that's a long while ago. I don't expect to do so again ; yet I think my daughter might spare me a little more of hers. But I suppose it can't be helped. I almost

wish I'd stayed out and died by my African river, I could hardly have felt more lonely than I do here."

"Father! is that quite kind of you to say so?" asked Jessie, with a touch of pain in her voice. "No one can be to me what you are; no one else can share with me the memory of my childhood, even Mac can't do that. I can't be a baby over again, you know, daddy."

The grave tenderness that stole into her words touched him very much; he drew her on to his knee, and she laid her head down on his shoulder.

"Darling child!" he said, kissing her hair. "The saddest part of the business is that we can never speak together of that past nor of her who made it what it was."

"I dreamed of her," said Jessie, softly, without raising her head; "I dreamed of her one night at Cauldknowe, and she looked so peaceful and so happy, and smiled as if she loved us both so much."

"Ah! my darling, don't speak of her," said Jessie's father; "she never comes to me with a smile."

"It was the night of the 7th of April—I remembered afterwards it was on the 7th of April—a long while ago that——"

"It was on the 7th of April I returned, Jessie. Never mention that date again."

They sat quiet for a few minutes, and then Jessie asked:

"And have you made a great deal of money again to-day?"

"Not a farthing."

"Then don't you think I had better tell Mac about—about Arnold Birkett? I can't keep secrets from Mac; I'm sure we may depend upon him; and, do you know, I half suspect Mrs. Carruthers must have heard something, her manner was so changed."

"Tell him by all means; I don't want my daughter to marry under false pretences; indeed, I would infinitely rather she did not marry at all just yet."

"She will not for ever so long. Her dear old daddy will be quite tired of her, long before she goes."

Meanwhile, John Harbuckle, followed by the loyal Alison, had gone into voluntary exile.

It was so chilly in the office that Alison was obliged to fetch a shawl for herself, and to insist upon Uncle John's putting on his great coat.

They went on steadily for nearly an hour, John Harbuckle at accounts and letters, Alison at entering extracts from a volume she was reading into her note-book; for Alison was a great collector of odds and ends of information, and was never satisfied if a day went by without some little addition to her stock.

Uncle John looked up once or twice at Alison, as she sat perched on one of the high stools, scribbling away very diligently, with the light falling on her neat little head; for neat it was, in spite of Miss Jessie's sneers and her own haunting sense of untidiness.

"Do you think that I, too, ought to be doing accounts?" she asked, noticing that he was looking at her.

"You do accounts! Certainly not."

"That's right; because I never could be taught to calculate. Six times three is almost beyond my powers."

"Accounts! I should think not; you have something better to do, my dear."

"Have I? What is that better thing?"

"Have you written that poem about the 'Street of the Little Sisters'?"

"Jessie says the Minories are really too ugly."

"Jessie doesn't understand the beauty of association as you do, my dear." John Harbuckle had finished his last letter when he made this remark; he turned round and surveyed his niece, resting his elbow on the desk, and his head against his hand.

"Seeing you sitting there, Alison," he said, "reminds me of Woolcomb and his wife. Many years ago they were very poor; he was only a clerk in the firm of which he is now the principal, and in those days clerks used to have to work late. Woolcomb was often kept at the office until ten o'clock, and his wife would come down of an evening—for Woolcomb had the place to himself—and make him tea, and sit by him. Then when work was over they used to walk back together to the City Road, and both of them have often assured me those were the happiest days of their lives."

"Then they don't believe in people waiting until they're ever so rich?" asked Alison.

"Well, that entirely depends upon the kind of people, you know," said John Harbuckle with a smile.

"Mac and Jessie, for instance."

"Jessie would make a poor man an excellent wife, I've no doubt. So she beat you on Sunday, did she? Funny little girl!" and John Harbuckle's smile deepened.

"It was really too pretty!" exclaimed Alison. "But it was as much as I could do to keep myself from laughing outright; I had to do so, you know, because of Jessie's feelings, which I didn't want to hurt. And oh! I forgot to tell you before, but what do you think she said? Her contempt for all of us then in the house was as undisguised as it was unbounded; all she could exclaim was, 'Oh! I do wish Uncle John were here! Why isn't Uncle John here?'"

"You don't mean it! you really don't mean it!" cried John Harbuckle, his kind blue eyes opening to their fullest extent with astonishment and delight. "You really don't mean it!" he repeated, and with these words, John Harbuckle actually blushed; he did indeed; he was nearly fifty-four, but he blushed.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

ON A SATURDAY MORNING.

FINE weather came back coyly ; the light, vaporous clouds that hung above the Tower and the mists that clothed here and there its grey walls, seemed to belong to Spring rather than Summer. In another sense, fine weather returned coyly to our Jessie.

Mac was a good deal worse for his exertions on the day the matrons met, but by the end of a fortnight all anxiety on his behalf had subsided ; he was about again and sufficiently himself to resist being taken to Birrendale by his relatives when they departed.

On a certain Saturday morning, the third after Mac's accident, Jessie received a note in which Mac promised to come down to Trinity Square at some time during that day.

Jessie was consequently in very great spirits ; she could not help being so, for she had not yet had a really good talk to Mac since the accident, and she was enjoying the reaction after her late anxiety. There was truly a lurking uneasiness about one or two things ; the behaviour of Mrs. Carruthers and the Arnold Birkett unpleasantness, to wit ; but in spite of these things the thought of that long and uninterrupted talk she was anticipating made her run about the house with quicker steps than ever.

The domestic difficulty had been overcome, Mrs. Robbins's department was no longer headless, the innumerable curiosities in the drawing room and the plants in the blue pots were all that now required Jessie's care.

She had dusted the drawing-room, and was giving the thick-leaved plants in the great blue pots the good sponging they so much needed, when there was a ring at the bell, and the neatest of Sarah Janes who ever wore cap and apron went down the few stairs in front of the landing, where Jessie was at work, to open the baize door.

Now it was so ridiculously early that Jessie never thought of connecting that ring at the bell with any visitor at all, much less with Mac Carruthers ; who, for a wonder, had just slipped out of her thoughts.

Her fingers were wet and grimy, for the Smoke and Fog Committee had not then banished soot from the neighbourhood of Trinity Square, and the leaves of the variegated plant she was sponging had suffered much during the last few days and were very grubby ; she was just on the point of calling out to Alison that a favourite pot of lycopodium she had been looking at a minute or two before, was on its last legs, poor thing, when she heard a well-known voice asking :

“ Is Miss Jessie Bayliss at home ? ”

“ Mac at this time of the day ! ” exclaimed Jessie, and fled into the dining-room, conscious of her dirty hands.

In another moment there was Mac actually coming up the stairs.

Mac walked straight into the drawing-room, and as he entered he caught sight of a looking-glass above the mantel-piece, in which looking-glass he saw a girl's face peering cautiously round the edge of the opposite door.

Mac, without a word of warning, turned suddenly, intercepting the abigail who was about to shut him in, walked past, and all but stumbled over the tray and bowl of water Jessie had left on the floor, and went into the dining-room, where whom should he find but that very same girl whom he had seen peering round the door.

"Ah! There you are; now I've caught you!" he exclaimed.

But the catching was metaphorical for a moment or two, because Jessie retreated before him until she came against the curtain of the furthest window.

There was no further running away possible, Mac followed her up, and Jessie, radiant with happiness and blushes, laughed out merrily:

"Look at my hands! They're just one mass! I've been sponging the plants."

"I saw you looking round the door!" exclaimed Mac, seizing both the grubby little hands with a mighty grasp; "now I'm going to pay you out!" which he did in the fashion most orthodox—so I suppose—among engaged people.

"You have come very early, Mac," presently said Jessie.

"Too early?"

"No, not too early," said Jessie. "How is the bad place getting on?—you have it still strapped up, I see. I hope it's not hurting you."

"Oh, it's healing grandly," said Mac, lightly. "I daresay it will leave an ugly scar; but, you know, I haven't undertaken to supply the beauty—that's your business. It seems such an age since I had a word with you that I thought I'd like a good long day. But I can go away for an hour or two if you are not ready. Only I've so much to talk about that if we don't begin in good time we shan't get through with it."

"So much?—what about?" asked Jessie.

"A good deal about ourselves and something about other people."

A little shadow crossed the brightness of Jessie's face; such a shadow as sometimes passed over the clear ripples of the Birrenwater in summer time.

"They have heard of Arnold Birkett," she thought.

But Mac threw himself back in his chair and laughed a ringing hearty laugh.

"Ha, ha! they've all gone back to Muirhead! they wouldn't let Alec stay another day in town after the poor fellow happened to say, innocently enough, that he was just wearying to see the Tower, so they packed up and went by the very next mail. See what comes of being an only son and heir! It's almost better to be a free and penniless

nephew, isn't it? *I was* amused, it tickled my fancy so! Poor old Alec, he didn't half like it! He'd have liked to come down here to-day."

"You don't mean to say that Alec has taken a fancy to Alison? I'd jump to the top of the Monument if I thought so!" exclaimed Jessie, laughing too.

"For heaven's sake don't go and spread such a report unless you want to banish us both from Birrendale for ever! Alec only said he thought your cousin was a very sensible girl and that he talked to her; it was rather a great deal for him to say, because he never talks to girls. But pray don't repeat it, or we're lost to Muirhead for ever."

"I don't care if we are," said Jessie.

"Don't Care came to a bad end," said Mac, reprovingly.

"Well, I may go and wash my hands, mayn't I?"

"I'll give you three minutes by the clock; not a fraction more. But mind, not a word to Alison, as they say on the stage!" said Mac, holding up a warning fore-finger with a would-be melodramatic action.

Jessie flew up-stairs, nearly knocking her cousin down on the landing:

"Ha, ha, I know something!" the wicked child cried out, gleefully.

But Alison, who was mentally rushing after a line for her "Street of the Little Sisters," which was trying to escape her grasp, only said:

"I daresay you know a great many things; you're so clever, you know!"

"You unsatisfactory being!" cried Jessie, giving her cousin a good shake. "However, as I've only three minutes to sort myself in, I'll put off the telling."

"Very well," assented the unaroused Alison, calmly, counting syllables on her finger.

And in three minutes Jessie flew down again.

"How serious you're looking!" said Jessie, as she re-entered the dining-room, where Mac was sitting, shading the great black patch on his forehead with his hand; "that place pains you still, I'm afraid."

"A little—nothing to speak of. Was I looking serious?" and he took his hand from the black patch.

"Yes," said Jessie, a little anxiously. "You don't look like your brae-foot self one wee bit."

"Well, you know," said Mac, as if with an effort, "life isn't all champagne and billiards, or even all fishing in the Birren!"

He paused, looking up at Jessie, who had taken her favourite seat in the window-settle, with a certain thoughtfulness unusual with him.

Jessie looked down, played nervously for a moment with the fringe of her dress, and then said, haltingly:

"You have heard something about me—not about me myself, something about my family?"

"Oh, the relative you were with at the theatre!" said Mac, quite easily; "I ought to have abased myself more deeply—but, you remember, Jessie, you said at once, you dear child, that you forgave me. You forgave me so frankly I hardly dared to ask you again, for fear you should think I didn't believe you. You do forgive me, don't you?"—and he bent towards her—"you do, don't you? Because, if you don't, I'll order in some more dust and ashes."

"Oh yes, of course I do; don't let's speak of it again," said Jessie, with a little smile that faded quickly and left a painful直ness about her sweet lips. "You know, Mac," she said, her voice sinking with each word, "you know, I am never going to keep any secrets from you, dear."

"You darling!" exclaimed Mac, with fervent tenderness, drawing his chair close up to the window and Jessie; "I *couldn't* keep one from you if my life depended on its keeping."

"I am going to tell you something;—it is difficult to tell—but—"

"Oh, never mind!" said Mac, touched by the look of distress in her face. "Don't tell me, then; I don't want to know."

"But I must tell you; and when I've told you, you are to do just what you think right about it, and not to take me or my feelings into consideration at all, not in the very least.—I think I'd better give you up, Mac!"

"Give me up! What's happened now? Well, let us hear this dreadful secret then. What is it? Your hair is all false? Something of that sort, I suppose!" Mac tried to laugh, but it was a rather dismal failure.

"You are mistaken in me; I was mistaken in myself—you thought that I was an orphan, I thought so myself, but I'm not," said Jessie; "my father has come back."

"It was your father, then, I saw you with?" asked Mac.

Jessie nodded.

"You don't seem over-pleased. Is he going to object to me?"

"No," said Jessie, "no; of course he sees he must take things as he finds them—but perhaps you may object to him."

And then in broken sentences and with eyes dimming now and then with tears, Jessie told him all she knew of her parents, of her own early days, of her father's return; and of Arnold Birkett.

Mac listened gravely. The latter part of the narrative was unpleasant to him; he was utterly unused to being mixed up with anything that was not of the most correct; he rebelled inwardly against Arnold Birkett.

"You don't like it," said Jessie.

"No, I don't," remarked Mac, almost bluntly.

"If I had known it before we came here, when we were in

Birrendale, I should not—I think I should not have let you fish at the brae-foot. Perhaps, if we tried very hard, we might some day forget about Birrendale, mightn't we, Mac?" asked Jessie, very softly and sadly.

"I never forget," said Mac, with decision, and paused. "But why are we wasting time?" he added, rousing himself. "What you have told me can make not a shade of difference to my feelings for you, and I hope it will not in yours for me. Silly child!" he went on, "do you think I'm going to give you up again when I've only just found you? Give you up, indeed! not for all the fathers and uncles and aunts between here and John o' Groats!"

"I half meant to run away from you, Mac," whispered Jessie, the coziest little bit of a smile creeping along her lips, until it nestled in the corners, although there was one big tear that had escaped from under her drooping eyelids coming down each cheek.

Mac was obliged to leave the arm-chair and sit beside Jessie on the window settle, and say a great many kind words to comfort her.

"I am very glad you like me, Mac," presently said Jessie humbly; "I like to be liked; and especially I like you to like me."

"Like me! Liking's a poor word for what I feel for you! I wonder if there has been one moment since that day on which we drove through Birrendale, and a good while before it, when I haven't thought of you and loved you with all my heart; and when I—fool that I was—felt I'd lost you.—Oh, Jessie!"

"Oh, Mac!"

Then there were words that need not be put down here.

The good old sun, that had been trying all the morning to get a peep of the great City, came out from the fleecy clouds, and looked in at those two young people, sitting side by side, the good old sun that has seen so many a *replica* of that little picture before!

There those two sat, now and then unconsciously lifting their eyes to the gardens that covered the site of the old Aceldama, but seeing them not; there they sat, while the time went by in whispered talk, under the very eyes of the stately Roman-nosed Shepherdess, and the bespangled goddess Ceres, the Lord Mayor, with his collar of state, and all the other portraits that hung on the walls of what used to be John Harbuckle's den.

Not the first of such scenes that those portraits had looked down upon by any manner of means! Once, another Jessie had sat in that same cushioned window-seat, listening to another young man, and had been happy with him, too, before the arrival of young Arthur Bayliss.

By that very window the goddess Ceres—but without her spangled veil and wheat-ears—had worked at her tambour frame morning after morning, as a certain masculine person, who passed that house every

day on his way to the Customs knew very well. So that neither Ceres nor the Shepherdess and her husband, the Lord Mayor—who had had a most romantic history—had any real cause for looking down on Mac and Jessie with lack of sympathy.

Yes, a great many things had happened in that room ! A room that has been standing for, say, a hundred and fifty years has seen much.

There was the chair in which John Harbuckle's mother had died. There the door through which John Harbuckle had run with his little sister, Mary, like a flying cherub, on his shoulder ; the very same door round which Mac had that day caught Jessie peering. There was the old yellow mantel-piece with its last-century garlands and pilasters on which John Harbuckle had found his Jessie's fatal letter. There was the argand burner, and the great table where we first saw the old bachelor writing his "few lines" to his fellow antiquary, and there were Mac and Jessie sitting by the window absolutely unconscious that any other beings had ever lived and loved before them !

Dear ! dear ! dear !—as John Harbuckle would say—who would have thought it was only on the 7th of last April, when all the tables and chairs, and even the dinner waggon and sideboard, were all crowded up with the dryest of archaeological books and papers ! Oh, what an upheaval ! See what comes of introducing the feminine domestic element into a literary den !

"And now, darling, we thoroughly understand each other, don't we ?—so we'll talk business," said Mac, after they had discussed their late experiences with considerable amplitude. "Why are you looking at me so seriously, Jessie ? I am alarmingly ugly with this patch, I suppose ?"

"I don't mind the ugliness of it a bit," said Jessie, "but I'd like to see you looking more as you used to look when we were in Birrendale."

"Ah ! that's a long while ago," said Mac, half merrily, half sadly.

"A long while ! why it was only last spring, and we're only just in August."

"By the calendar," said Mac, "I suppose you're right, but by my own feelings I'm years older than I was when I fished at the braefoot."

"Mac ! I don't like to hear you talk so. Have I, then, made you so unhappy ?"

"You, my darling ! why you seem to me, sometimes, all the youth that is left to me."

"Donaldson has been worrying you ?" asked Jessie, anxiously looking at Mac, for the tone of his voice had suddenly lost all its blitheness.

"He's simply taking all the life out of me," said Mac, "and just now I've none to spare. I witnessed an awful scene last night. I hardly know now what I had better do about him."

"Poor old Mac!" said Jessie, with a sympathetic pressure on his arm.

"To see a really noble woman fairly broken down with distress knocks me over," said Mac. "I sometimes wish I wasn't quite so—so—I don't quite know how to express it, but I can't help feeling things."

"But I should hate you if you were not," said Jessie encouragingly. "It was the woman Donaldson is engaged to?"

"Yes. She will neither give him up nor marry him, so of course there are scenes now and then. Unhappily, they dragged me into one last night at her house."

"Is she very fond of him?" asked Jessie, with a sigh.

"Yes; that's the worst part of the business. And he really can be awfully pleasant sometimes. He's as fond of her as he can be of anyone, that's, perhaps, not saying much."

"Why doesn't she marry him, then, and look after him herself?" said Jessie.

"Would you, if you were she?" asked Mac seriously, his glance resting on Jessie with a kind of weighty questioning.

Jessie's own glance fell beneath Mac's; she sat still for a moment, pondering.

She could not answer that question, and evaded it by another.

"But if she is very fond of him?—"

"Ah!" and there was a whole world of various meaning in that sigh of Mac's.

"But if she is very fond of him?—"

"Then she shouldn't be!" exclaimed Mac with blunt emphasis.

"Of course she shouldn't be, but can she help it?" asked Jessie.

"I don't know," said Mac. "But I think that were I only once in the state Donaldson was in the night before last, I should at least have manliness enough left in me never to insult you with my presence again. I could never see you any more; never, Jessie."

"Do you really feel like that?" asked Jessie.

"Of course I do!" exclaimed Mac. "I'd kill myself sooner than let you marry such a man, if I were such a man myself! Do you think if I were drowning I'd drag you down with me?"

"Don't look like that, Mac, you frighten me!—Perhaps it would be the kindest thing you could do. But I thought you and Donaldson were getting on so well," she added, changing the subject.

"So we were. Why, he never let me see him touch anything stronger than coffee! I acquired a wonderful control over him while I was all right. I don't know how it was, but he seemed to shrink from letting me see him take anything then; but now he's just broken out again worse than ever. To do him justice, he was very kind to me when the accident happened. He sent for doctors, wrote telegrams, and did everything quite for the best; but as soon as the others came and relieved guard, there he was, all wrong again."

"He'd lost his master," put in Jessie.

"Aye! and I'm not so certain he'll find him again," said Mac doubtfully. "I hope I've not made a rash vow."

"What do you mean?" asked Jessie.

"She made me promise last night not to give him up; and I did. I hope I've done right: but you can't imagine how awful it will be to a fellow like myself, who is used to constant activity, to be penned up on board a yacht with a creature whom you can't get to do one single hand's turn."

"The yacht! I thought you were going on the Continent with him," said Jessie.

"So we were; but now he thinks he would rather make a trip to Norway in the *Fire-fly*. You see, he doesn't take the remotest interest in any mortal thing; but she fancies that he likes the *Fire-fly* a little, so I've promised her to go; but"—and Mac shrugged his shoulders.

"You wouldn't be away very long?" asked Jessie.

"No," he hesitated, "certainly not to begin with. I must see how we get on together first. She would have liked me to take him right away."

"Right away. How far away?"

"Well, you know, in these days no place is really far off? You get from anywhere in—"

"They want you to go to the other end of the world?" asked Jessie.

"Don't be frightened; I don't mean to go yet awhile, I can tell you. Besides, with a good steam yacht one can get back from the other end of the world in little more than half-an-hour, you know."

"You didn't promise?" asked Jessie.

"Promise! Well, I promised to go to Norway, but that's no distance. As to the rest, is it likely I should make such a promise without consulting you? Of course I am going, henceforth, to consult you about everything! Of course I am!"

"That's right!" said Jessie; "always take my advice and you'll never do wrong! You didn't ask me if you might go to Norway, though; that was wicked; but I suppose I must forgive you. When do you start?"

"As soon as we can be off. The trip will quite set me up, I expect. But the utter laziness of that man is something too dreadful. You can't imagine anyone doing absolutely nothing the whole day long, can you? It makes me feel as if I could kick him."

So Mac and Jessie sat in the window-seat discussing Donaldson and the trip until at last there were bugles, bells and clocks sounding outside the open window. The old-fashioned, pagoda-shaped affair on John Harbuckle's mantel-piece struck one, and Jessie sprang up.

"One o'clock so soon!" she exclaimed.

"One o'clock already!" echoed Mac.

"And we haven't had half our talk out yet!" returned Mac. "I say, Jessie, isn't there some place out of doors where we can go on with it? It is getting very fine again; won't you take me out presently and show me something?"

"You'll be like poor Alec, wearying to see the Tower?" asked Jessie, with light mockery.

"You've something else to show me, perhaps. It's a good way from the Birren and the brae-foot, unfortunately. Oh, banks and braes! I shouldn't be sorry if we were there now."

"But there's a little river here, a nice little river called the Thames," laughed Jessie.

"Ah, to be sure, so there is! Happy thought, you shall show me the Thames. We'll go out presently and look at the ships and talk business; nothing but business, mark you! I'm sure I don't know how the morning's gone," said Mac; "it doesn't seem as if I've been here five minutes!"

Just then the door was opened and in came uncle John. He looked furtively about; he shook hands with Mac quite bashfully, and inquired of Jessie if she knew where Alison was.

Jessie ran off and brought Alison back with her; when John Harbuckle, after having ascertained, by judicious cross-questioning, that his sister, Mrs. Bayliss, was out shopping and would not be in to lunch, proposed to bring up his friend Woolcomb—taking, you see, a mean advantage of his sister's absence. Oh, human nature, fallible even in such an exemplary character as John Harbuckle, what must it be in ordinary mortals like ourselves?

Mac and Jessie were not sorry to be quiet a little; they had talked a good deal during the morning, and their minds were full of crowding thoughts; the consequence was, that Alison, who made a charming hostess (a much better one than Jessie, any unprejudiced person would admit), Alison and the two elder men talked antiquities with tremendous enthusiasm, for, "Bits of old rubbish are so inspiring to some people!" as Jessie remarked, *sotto voce*, to Mac.

You will be shocked to know that a heap of books and engravings accumulated on the table again. The engravings were principally of the ruins of the once famous Convent of the Poor Clares, or Minorites, in which Alison was particularly interested. Poor John Harbuckle!—it was so seldom he ventured to put a book on the dining-room table nowadays, that it was a perfect luxury to be able to do so once more!

It was Saturday afternoon; business was over for the week. Already the plateau in front of the bonded warehouses was nearly clear. There was no occasion for John Harbuckle and his friend to hurry away, so they lingered.

"We are going to see the ships and the Thames," presently said Jessie, rising from the table.

"This is a charming place to live in," remarked Mr. Woolcomb, "full of such varied interests—incomparably the most interesting site in Europe, as my friend Harbuckle well observes."

"It's none so bad," said Jessie lightly, and five minutes later she and Mac left the house together.

"Now, Jessie," said Mac as they turned towards the river, "we really must go on talking business."

"My dear Mac, who's trying to prevent you? Talk business by all means; begin this very minute—or stay, we must just take one turn through Catherine Court first. I must show you where my dear little mother used to live, because, you know, you are to know all about me and mine, and there are never to be any secrets between us; and now I've told you everything I'm really—I suppose I oughtn't to say so, because of making you more conceited than you are—but I really am very happy; only I don't quite like your going away. We'll go down to the Tower wharf," said Jessie, as she and Mac left Catherine Court. "We can walk up and down there and talk, and no one will stone us."

"What with the Tower and what with your cousin you must be growing quite learned by this time," said Mac. "Pray don't get learned, there's a good child; be a dunce like me; don't grow learned."

"Not I!" returned Jessie gaily. "Still, you know, if you are ever so silly you can't help picking up something, and really this place is interesting even to such an ignorant person as I."

"Don't call yourself names; I can't allow it. It might have been all very well for you to do so when you were *your* Jessie, but now you are *my* Jessie it's different."

"Mustn't I be humble any more?" she asked.

"You are to think the truth about yourself and respect other people's property," said Mac, looking down at her with great pride.

"Oh well, then, if I must not be humble I'll be generous; here goes my last threepenny to the old crossing-sweeper, who'll wish us good luck."

"How you do misuse terms, to be sure! I call that *barter*, not generosity. Are you as superstitious as you used to be?" Mac asked, as, after Jessie had given the woman the coin, a shower of scarcely audible blessings followed them.

"Oh, all my omens turn out just the contrary; I'm losing faith in them. Such very strange things have happened to me since we've been in town, and they've turned out so well that I'm just in a whirl about everything."

"So am I," echoed Mac; "so we're both alike! I shall lavish a penny on one of those panoramic views of the Tower for poor Alec."

"This brae isn't like the Cauldknowe brae, is it?" said Jessie, as they went together down the hill, among the sellers of views who

pestered them until Mac actually bought a strip. "It looks terribly grubby and untidy to-day, and the few remaining people are horribly squalid. I don't like seeing squalid people, it makes one feel squalid oneself. Everybody is going away home. Always on Saturday afternoon here one feels one ought to be going home too."

"He let us pass because he knows I belong to Mr. John Harbuckle," continued Jessie, as the man who guarded the entrance to the Tower wharf withdrew respectfully, after having approached a few steps in order to challenge them.

"You belong to Mr. Harbuckle! I thought you admitted just now you belonged to me!" exclaimed Mac.

"Do I?" Jessie asked, very dreamily looking out on the full river, ignoring a string of visitors who were leaving the ticket-place for the Tower in the custody of a Beefeater. "Perhaps I do," she went on, gently. "It is very strange! I don't understand it. Does a girl or a woman never belong to herself? Must she always be some one else's property?"

"Must we all belong to somebody else?" returned Mac. "Horrible is the fate of the wretch who has to look after himself! I belong to you, Jessie, don't I?" he added, with a certain wistfulness in his tone she had not noticed before.

"Perhaps—I don't know," she said, in a half-whisper.

"But I do know. I know very definitely. You are always going to take care of me, and I am always going to take care of you. I knew that the first time I saw you. Take my arm, Jessie. There, a little firmer, darling. So! Let me feel sure I have found you at last. My Jessie, you can never imagine and I shall never be able to tell you what I felt when I was fool enough to think I had lost my dearest girl—it broke me down altogether."

"Poor old Mac!" said Jessie, patting the arm she had just taken. "Don't you think I can tell just a very little? I thought I'd lost you, you know. Have you quite got over it, Mac?" she added, rather anxiously.

"Yes, but you know I haven't quite got over this," he replied, touching the black dressing on his forehead.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF SORROW.

JESSIE was destined never to forget that Saturday afternoon's stroll with Mac Carruthers.

There are circumstances in the lives of all of us that time never touches as long as the memory lasts. Like the characters engraven on the Assyrian marbles which remain sharp and clear to this day, as

if they had never suffered a burial of twenty-four centuries, so are some events cut into human hearts.

The keenness of their edge is never blunted ; the vivid colouring of their details never fades, until the heart and brain, on which they are imprinted, perish with them.

Such an event was John Harbuckle's loss of Jessie's mother ; such an event was that stroll with Mac Carruthers to Jessie herself.

How many a time will it all rise up before her ! How many, how many a time !

She is young still, but should she live until her children's children cluster round her knee, even then she will see it all again and feel it all again.

The broad walk before the Tower walls, the broader Thames, with its numberless craft, will all come back, and so will the sound of the lapping of the river against the stone steps, and her own young figure and his, standing there as they listened to the gentle beating of the water, mingling with the sharp tones of the call-boys from the passing steamers.

The colour will come back too, the red coats of a group of idle soldiers, the grey of her own dress, the darker grey of the Tower wall, the brown of Mac's hair and clothes, the black on his forehead—and that last detail—ah ! that last—when again will she cease to see it ?

They sauntered up and down, talking now of their own affairs, now of the great river and of the ships and boats, now of the Tower. They looked at the Traitors' Gate and spoke of familiar history, talking unconscious poetry ; they watched a truck being pushed along, a tram from the Ordnance Stores, and talked prose.

They saw a few things that even furnished subjects for merriment ; they both said words very delightful to each other, but which would look foolish in black and white. They talked about Birrendale, and of the market day at Kirkhope, when they had been offered gloves at a penny a pair, and they observed, laughingly, both of them, that this would be a very nice world to live in if it were not so dear, thinking just then that it was alone the lack of money that kept them apart. Jessie took Mac's arm as they went on to the wharf, and held it all the while they walked up and down ; that, too, is a circumstance she will never forget. Nor will she ever forget that, when they had seen enough of the shipping and wharf, and were coming up the hill again, and again were being pestered to buy long strips of views, they met John Harbuckle, and Mr. Woolcomb, and Alison coming out of the Tower Gardens, where they had been examining a heap of old stones over by the Postern pump, but had strolled round to the gate opposite the bonded warehouses.

" Oh, Jessie ! " Mac exclaimed, as he saw the others opening the gate, " let us go and look at the curious little arbour where we sat and talked about that wretched Donaldson, on that glorious night

when I rushed down here to tell you the news, and you looked so pleased to see me."

"Oh, very well!" assented Jessie, "I'll ask Uncle John for the key. Only be careful, Mac," she added gaily, "be very careful you don't mention to any of those earthworms that you wish to see anything in particular, or we shall never be able to get rid of them. You can't think what dreadfully tenacious creatures they are; limpits are nothing to them. If they once got on to antiquities you'd never get them off, they'd stick to us all the afternoon. Be cautious now, Mac. Uncle John, the key, please. Alison, I can see you've unearthened something, but"—lowering her voice—"pray don't tell us! We don't want to know—'Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be otherwise.'"

Uncle John gave them the key; Mr. Woolcomb tried to excite their interest in the old stones, but they would not let it be excited, so they passed on, and the antiquaries did them no hurt. Mac and Jessie looked after them for an instant before they unlocked the gate, and they both laughed, although what there was to laugh at no one but themselves could know; they were thankful they were rid of the others.

Jessie never again laughed quite like that; it was her last truly girlish, light-hearted laugh. She felt she was a girl when she laughed by that gate; a few seconds later she felt she was a woman.

She and Mac walked side by side for a few steps, until they reached the broad, smooth path above the moat, the path then screened from the road by thick bushes.

As they turned into that path—it was nearly opposite the Beauchamp Tower—*Mac took Jessie's arm and leaned on it as if from weariness or pain.*

As he did so, Jessie felt her heart die down with an awful foreboding.

For a moment she could not speak.

"Mac," she said, after they had taken a step or two, speaking with a grave, womanly decision, mixed with great tenderness, "I am sure that bruise is paining you."

Mac had for a few moments leaned rather heavily on her arm; he noticed her altered tone, feared he had alarmed her, and relaxed the pressure.

"There is a dull ache, that's all," he said.

"What does the doctor say?" asked Jessie. These were the words she spoke aloud; this was the question she was anxious to have answered, but the sentence she said to herself was:

"Mac will henceforth lean on me, not I on him. I must take care of him, not he of me."

"The doctor? oh, he says it's healing up all right enough. Jessie, I say, Jessie, don't frighten yourself about it! It will be all right soon. It hasn't had time to get well yet, considering what a blow it was."

Why did Jessie think of that night, the night of the 7th of April, when, as she had been sitting on the little stone wall that bounded the hearth at Cauldknowe, and had asked her aunt about seeking help from John Harbuckle, Mrs. Bayliss had said, with such bitter emphasis :

“ When you are a widow yourself, it will be time for you to advise a widow ! ”

What made her think of it then? The words seemed to come across the moat to her, to come out of the Tower walls.

Was she to lose him after all?

“ You are tired, Mac,” she said.

“ Tired!—what nonsense! I, who am so used to racing about from morning till night, tired ! ”

“ That’s all very fine,” said Jessie. “ I know you are not strong again, yet. It’s no use pretending that you are.”

“ Wait till I come back from Norway,” said Mac, evading Jessie’s last remark; “ I shall be as strong as Samson then; you’ll see me one fine morning walking away with one of your Tower gates, portcullis and all. I shall carry it off in triumph to Muirhead and set it up in the grounds—on the point overlooking the Birren, you know—what an attraction it will be! and the daughters of Scotia will rejoice over it, singing, ‘ How are the Southerns fallen ! ’ and Alec, with the help of Alison, will add to the Border minstrelsy the Ballad of the Bold Carruthers. I tell you what it is, Jessie, all these exciting occurrences of the last few weeks have been too much for you; you are growing nervous. Now pray, there’s a dear child, don’t be nervous about me. I’m all right; I’m sure to fall on my feet, I always do; and I really couldn’t bear to think you were worrying yourself about me; you mustn’t, Jessie; really now, and seriously, there is not the slightest occasion. This bruise, I’ll admit freely enough, for I don’t wish to deceive you, is rather more troublesome than I like; but that’s nothing; a week or two will set me up completely.”

“ Then I shall forgive Donaldson for taking you away,” said Jessie, trying to speak gaily, but quite conscious that Mac had been talking on so glibly only to keep her from being nervous about him.

The fact was that Mac, although he rattled along at almost his old rate, was in more pain than he cared to admit, and he tried to fight it down, but its gnawing was not to be stilled.

“ This is the way to our little arbour,” said Jessie, as they paused at the foot of an ascending path nearly opposite that brick Tower at the north-east angle in which Walter Raleigh suffered so terribly from cold during his last imprisonment.

“ Jessie, you’ve never taken me along that other walk,” exclaimed Mac, pointing to the path over-shadowed by the dock warehouses. “ Let’s go along there first, then we shall have been all round the square, if you can call a five-sided figure a square.”

Jessie shook her head, and laid her hand on Mac's arm as if to detain him.

"Don't look so solemn ; come, I've quite a curiosity to see the end of that walk ; come Jessie," said Mac, with all his old impetuosity, and he tried to move on.

"My darling ! my darling !" cried Jessie with wild entreaty in her voice, holding him back with all her might. She had never before used that expression to him ; sudden terror forced the cry from her now. He turned round at once, her face was quivering.

"Jessie, what is it, my love ?" he asked tenderly.

"Oh, Mac, that path ends in a grave :—a little wilderness and a grave," she said, too agitated to prevent herself from saying what she wished unsaid as soon as the words were spoken.

Mac made no attempt to go on ; his own countenance fell. He was for an instant startled by the incident, but recovering himself quickly, he said steadily :

"Darling, so end all paths," and as Jessie remembers, he raised his head, which had been bent toward her, and quietly looked along that path.

The flat grave was hidden in the little wilderness. Mac did not see it, but he caught sight, as he gazed along the walk, of masts slowly gliding by the opening between the docks and the Tower.

"But not that path—that ends differently," said Mac, pointing to the river ; "that path falls into the ocean. Look, Jessie, there is a ship going down with the tide. See, the masts fill all that space ; it's going right through a sunbeam. It's very beautiful, isn't it ?"

Jessie looked at it and smiled, but rather faintly.

"We are going to sail together," said Mac, drawing Jessie a little nearer to him.

"We don't know," said Jessie, with vague distress. "Perhaps we are not. One of us might be sent out to sea alone, and then what would become of the poor left-behind one ?" and she shuddered.

"I tell you what it is, Jessie, I shan't let you bring me into the Tower Gardens again ; you are far too nervous and superstitious for such a place," said Mac. "I'm afraid you've been making yourself ill with worry about me. Now don't worry any more, there's a dear girl. I say," turning round to the dock warehouse, and trying to divert her attention to a fresh object, as one does a child, "did you ever notice those great big B's up there ? What's becomes of the S's, eh ? B and S is what one is accustomed to hear and see together in these days. Those B's look awfully lonely up there. Doesn't it strike you so ?"

"The Lord Mayor uses up all the S's for his collar, don't you know ?" said Jessie, lightly. "The B stands for——"

"I know what it stands for with Langdyke," said Mac.

"It stands for 'Bonded' here," said Jessie. "Everything's bonded about here, warehouses, casks, carmen, everything. I often

think we must all be bonded too. Ah!" she went on, rather quaintly, still looking up at the gigantic walls, "there's a deal of solid comfort to be got out of these things; they're like Alison in that respect. Docks and warehouses and foreign produce, and so on, don't make one eerie, like those old prison lodgings do. Prose is a very fine thing, Mac, don't you think so now?"

"Now? When did I ever think anything else, you funny little creature? Go on—I know you've more to say, I can see it in your face," said Mac, still intent on cheering her as well as he could, for she had alarmed him by her terror.

"Yes," said Jessie. "How nice it would be if you were a City man! If, for instance, you were learning indigo, or ivory, or palm oil, or tea. By-the-bye, I have learned to recognise the young men who are studying tea; they always have such new, new hats, they are always got up so nattily (you must excuse that horrid word, but it's the only one that expresses them), and they run about in a desperate hurry with a little sample canister tucked most cunningly under one arm, just as if it were part of themselves. Oh, there's no mistaking them!"

The merry, merry twinkle came once more into Mac's eyes.

"How I could fancy myself as a young man learning tea!" he laughed. "So that's the sort of fellow you admire, is it?"

"No, it's the solid advantages of all these things," said Jessie. "Only, to be sure, they go wrong sometimes, and people kill themselves for shellac and other drysalteries. A man killed himself last week, you know, for something of——"

"Jessie! Get out of the way, Jessie!" cried Mac, drawing her back suddenly.

"Ah! they're stoning us! I forgot—" and a great piece of brickbat fell about a yard in front of her.

"The rascal! There he goes! Ugh! I wish I could catch him!" exclaimed Mac, gnashing his teeth with rage. "Ugh! If I had you, you rascal!" shouted Mac.

"It's our fault! We shouldn't have stood here talking. Make haste, let us get home. We shall be safe there. We ought not to have stood here where they can see us. I told you it enrages them too much. They hate decent people. Make haste home."

"If I could only catch him!" ejaculated Mac, fiercely. Just then the bruise on his forehead pained him so much that it was a relief to him to be able to shout after the wretched urchin who had thrown the stone.

"Shall we go into the little arbour?" said Mac; "that rascal has frightened you."

"No, no," said Jessie. "Let us get home as soon as we can. I can't stay here any longer. No, Mac—I can't take your arm, they might stone us again. Come, let us get home." And she went up to the gate, Mac following, and so they left the Tower Gardens.

The Lurlei of the Rhine sits, as the song tells us, upon a rock and combs her golden hair with a golden comb, while she watches for her prey ; the locks of the bare-headed Lurlei of the Thames, who haunts the corner opposite St. Katherine Docks, appear as if no comb, golden or otherwise, often touched them. The Lurlei and the gallant British Tar were standing about unmolested when Mac and Jessie left the gardens by the gate opposite the Mint. No one, apparently, had thought of stoning them.

Going along the narrow Postern Row, Mac and Jessie were sore beset by the local photographer, who wanted to take their portraits ; that is to say, they would have been had not Mac made short work of him, and pushed on. Mac was in no mood for standing nonsense just then ; he would have liked to have put the matter of that brickbat at once into the hands of the City police ; only it so happened that it had been thrown just outside the Lord Mayor's jurisdiction.

"Poor old Mac ! how furious he was about that brickbat, to be sure ! He didn't make near as much fuss about the place on his forehead !" said Jessie, many a time afterwards to Alison.

Jessie did not know at the time how much of that furiousness was due to the pain of that bad place.

She was thankful when they left Postern Row with its motley passengers, where the seamen of all nations are often to be found among a choice selection of London roughs of the loafing kind, of which last class it must be confessed Jessie had an abject terror ; she was thankful, I say, when she and Mac reached the broad white pavement in front of the elegant Trinity House.

There she ventured to take Mac's arm.

"I have a mortal dread of the lower orders," said she, "you can't think how frightened I am of them. Alison isn't ; but then, I don't know how it is, they never annoy her, although she often goes prowling about those dreadful streets behind the Mint. But no one ever annoys her ; now they never lose an opportunity of frightening me."

"Jessie, never go out alone here," said Mac, almost sternly ; then, his tone suddenly altering, "How I wish I could take you right away," he said ; "I shall never feel comfortable about you as long as you are here."

"Oh !" said Jessie, "they all look after me very well, and, you see, your presence was no protection just now, quite the contrary."

"It makes me long for the regions of the Far West !" said Mac, relapsing into something like his ordinary tone. "I often think I should like to go out to the plains beyond the Rocky Mountains and shoot wapiti ; there the London rough would never come, and there my little income would be wealth vast as the boundless prairies. I would be off at once only I can't bear the idea of your pretty hands being employed in nothing but washing up greasy pots and pans ; which seems to be the only occupation of the wife of the wapiti

hunter ; and, of course, I couldn't settle anywhere without you. No, Jessie, I'm afraid I couldn't stand it ; neither could you. Ah ! If those masts down yonder only belonged to that ship of mine that won't come home ! Well, they don't ! I must be getting back to Langdyke ; I left him this morning with that very noble woman who has the sublime folly to love him, when I came down to look——"

"At the sublimely foolish Jessie—eh, Mac ?"

"Eh, Mac ?—eh, Mac ?" he repeated, with a fond, playful mimicry, and then they found themselves again at John Harbuckle's door.

They looked for an instant into each other's faces, were each conscious that the other was hiding something. They smiled, turned grave at once, and went on through the hall and up the stairs. Jessie went first ; hidden from Mac, her eyes dimmed with tears, her features grew tremulous.

Mac followed, and now Jessie was not looking at him, he allowed his brow to contract with sharp physical pain.

"You will have a cup of tea before you go ?" asked Jessie, without turning round.

"Thanks, I shall be glad of it," he said, and Jessie's quick, anxious ear detected a suppressed agony in his voice, an uncommon ring of suffering in the commonplace phrase.

She did not turn and look at him, feeling instinctively that he would rather she did not, but she stretched a sympathising hand backwards to him.

He bent and kissed the outstretched palm, pressing it tightly to his lips, which a moment before he had been biting ; and as he did so a sharp pain touched Jessie's heart.

"Oh," she felt, "am I going to lose him after all ?"

(To be continued.)

OF MAGIC RINGS.

OF all the ornaments the human race has ever invented, to serve either as a sign of rank or for personal decoration, the ring is the most ancient and the most universally worn ; it is also that to which most symbolical meanings have been attached, and in every land, and in every century, it has been the source of the wildest legends and superstitions.

It would be a useless expenditure of time to seek to discover what can have given rise to this particular form of popular credulity ; the origin of these fantastic tales and beliefs lies far away in prehistoric times ; but their birthplace was probably Egypt, which seems to have been the primitive home of magic, divination, and of all that goes under the name of the occult sciences.

The earliest description, in fact, that exists of the rites and incantations by means of which a ring was supposed to be endowed with miraculous powers, is to be found in some scrolls of papyrus discovered in a tomb at Thebes in the early part of this century, and now preserved in the library of the University of Leyden.

Though the receipts contained in this document were apparently written in the third century of our era, and though some of them show traces of the influence of the Jewish religion and of the Gnostic doctrines prevailing throughout the East at that epoch, there can be no doubt that, for the most part, they have been handed down from remote ages ; for another papyrus dating from the reign of Rameses II. (1388-1322 B.C.) mentions the books of magic forms and rites kept in the treasury of the palace, which none but the king and the priests were allowed to consult.

The ceremonial connected with the manufacture of these rings is described in as positive and business-like a manner as though it were a question of performing experiments in chemistry or physical science, and as though the magician had carefully tested the results of his spells, and were convinced of their efficacy.

The ring, for instance, which shall give its owner great influence over emperors and kings must be made of gold, and carry in its bezel a piece of blue jasper on which is engraved, together with certain mystic words, a serpent biting its tail and encircling a crescent moon bearing a star on each horn.

To consecrate this ring, a sacrifice must be offered consisting of a goose, three cocks, and three doves, accompanied by libations of wine, milk, and honey, and the burning of various perfumes. The lengthy invocation pronounced whilst performing this sacrifice is, for the most part, utterly unintelligible, but some of the less obscure passages are

not wanting in poetical feeling. It is addressed to the "celestial divinities ; to those of the lower regions ; to those who haunt the middle air ; who rule over the living and the dead ; who guide the fates ; who direct the winds ; who reveal what is hidden ; who are the guardians of fire, and the preservers and benefactors of all that exists ;" and they are implored, as well as the "supreme Lord of all, whose name is secret and ineffable," to endow the wearer of the ring with all its powers and protect him from harm at all times and in all places.

Another ring, it is asserted, will enable its fortunate possessor to appease the anger of kings and nobles, and obtain all that he asks for : everything he says shall be believed, he shall be universally beloved, and at a touch of the gem set in the ring, doors shall fly open, chains be severed, and rocks shattered.

The writer of the treatise, after enumerating these highly valuable qualities, exclaims, as well he may :

"There is nothing greater in the world than this !"

The ring capable of performing these prodigies had set in it a heliotrope, on which was engraved, as in the preceding case, a serpent biting its tail, and within the circle thus formed the name of the sun in hieroglyphic characters, and a scarabee or sacred beetle surrounded by rays of light.

To consecrate it, a Litany of ninety-nine fantastic names, mostly unmeaning, but apparently derived from Hebrew or Greek, was recited during fourteen days, at the third, sixth and ninth hours, accompanied by a libation at each invocation, after which a white and yellow cock with two combs, was opened while still alive, and the ring deposited inside it for the space of a day and a night. The ceremony was ended by the recital of a hymn known as the "great Ouphor," which had the power of imparting life to statues and all carved or fictile works, by invoking the spirits of heaven, of earth, of the sea, and of the rivers, beseeching them to give a soul to the image which the necromancer had fashioned with these mysterious rites.

It is much to be regretted that besides recording the minute details of the ritual for the consecration of these rings, and sounding the praises of their virtues, this document should not have also informed us by what plausible excuses the magician was accustomed to appease the disappointed purchasers of his rings when they found that they failed to manifest the wonderful properties with which he professed to endow them. He must surely have often heard bitter complaints from persons who, though they had worn their rings night and day, had soon discovered that their superiors were still angry and unforgiving, their neighbours incredulous and unfriendly, and that doors would not fly open, or chains and rocks fall to pieces when touched with the talisman.

The famous ring of King Solomon, by means of which he controlled the elements and reigned over the good and the evil genii, has been made the subject of many marvellous tales, and the Mahommedan

legends which relate to Biblical personages give the following account of its origin.

As Solomon was returning to Jerusalem after having buried his father King David, he stopped to rest in a valley near Hebron and fell into a profound sleep. On awaking, he saw before him eight angels each of whom had wings brilliant with many colours. These were the angels who direct the winds, and their chief gave the king a gem on which was engraved, "God is power and glory," thereby conferring on him power to rule over the winds and bid them blow gently or violently, and carry him whithersoever he might wish to go.

When these angels vanished, the four who preside over all the creatures which live in the air, on the earth and in the waters appeared under the forms of a whale, an eagle, a lion and a serpent. They gave the king a gem bearing the words: "All ye living things, praise the Lord," which invested him with authority over all animated beings; and they brought to him a pair of every species of animal, with which he conversed, questioning them concerning their mode of life.

Then Solomon saw another angel, the upper part of whose form was like unto earth, and the lower part like unto water. The gem he presented to the king had inscribed on it the words: "The Heavens and the Earth are the Servants of God;" and by it he could level the highest mountains, and raise others in the midst of plains; dry up rivers and lakes, or inundate deserts with water. The last angel who appeared gave Solomon a gem on which was carved, "There is but one God," which made him ruler over the world of spirits, which are far more numerous than men and beasts, and fill nearly all the space between heaven and earth; some of them adore God and guard true believers from sin and danger, but others are infidels and seek every means of injuring the human race.

Solomon caused these four precious stones to be set in a ring, and the first use he made of this potent charm was to assemble all the demons and seal them with it, to mark them as his slaves. He then obliged them to build the Temple of Jerusalem, and weave for him the carpet, a square mile in extent, on which he travelled through the air with his household, while the genii and the demons preceded him, and all the birds of heaven flew overhead forming a canopy to shelter him from the sun.

One day, when going to the bath, Solomon left his ring with one of his wives, as was his custom, but, before taking it off, he forgot to utter his usual invocation, "In the name of God, the merciful."

Then the demon whom the Arabs call *Sakhar-el-Marid* put on the form of the king, presented himself in his stead to the Queen, and received from her the ring. When Solomon returned and claimed his ring, he was treated as an impostor, and driven ignominiously from the palace. He then wandered about, living on alms, till he became the servant of a fisherman.

The demon which had usurped the place of the king soon excited

the indignation of the people by his impiety and tyranny, and when forty days had elapsed, Assaf, the Grand Vizier, and the chief doctors of the law, made their way into his presence. They read to him the sacred words of Moses, and the demon, on hearing them, returned to his true shape, and flew away from the palace.

In his flight he dropped the ring into the sea. It was swallowed by a fish, which was caught by the fisherman whom Solomon served, who gave it to his slave. On opening the fish, the king regained his ring, and immediately ordered the winds to bear him back to Jerusalem, where he called before him the greatest, both among men and genii, and the most intelligent among beasts, and related to them what had befallen him. He then caused Sakhar to be shut up in a brazen vessel, which he sealed with his ring and threw into the Lake of Tiberias, where the demon shall remain till the Day of Judgment.

When the Angel of Death came to take the soul of Solomon, the king asked to be allowed to die while leaning on his staff in the hall of crystal in his palace. His prayer was granted, and the demons, not being aware of his death, continued to work at building the Temple for a year, by the end of which time it was finished. By that time, also, the ants had burrowed into the staff on which rested the body of the king, and when it gave way, and the corpse fell to the ground, the demons knew, at last, that Solomon was dead. They then, in revenge for the slavery to which they had been subjected, hid certain books on magic under the king's throne, and when these were discovered, they caused his memory to be held in evil repute as though he had been a necromancer. But the angels took the body of Solomon, and buried it, along with the ring, in a cavern in an unknown land, where it will repose until the Resurrection.

From the East the belief in magic rings was conveyed to Europe, most probably by the Greeks, for, though it does not appear in the masterpieces of earlier Greek literature, it is to be found in works of a later date, especially those of the school of Alexandria, which was much influenced by Oriental superstitions and philosophical theories, and contributed largely to their diffusion throughout the Roman Empire.

It thus became so strongly rooted in Europe that it survived the fall of Paganism, and lasted till long after the close of the Middle Ages and the revival of letters. It appears in many of the romances of chivalry, where a magic ring renders the hero of the tale invisible, or guards him from danger, and in the legends which the imagination of the people gradually built up round the names of the great men whose deeds had produced the most lasting impression on the minds of their contemporaries.

No historical personage during the Middle Ages has been made the subject of so many fabulous tales as Charlemagne, and a magic ring plays an important part in one of the legends relating to the great conqueror and legislator.

This ring was made at the request of the Empress Fastrada by certain wise men versed in the occult sciences of the East, who had accompanied the ambassadors sent by Haroun-al-Raschid to the court of Charlemagne, and they had endowed it with the gift of exercising such power over the Emperor that he would always remain faithfully attached to whoever wore it.

For many years the ring performed its duty, and carried out the intention of its makers, until the Empress, seized with a fatal malady, felt her last hour approaching. She then concealed the ring in her mouth, in order that it might be buried with her, and thus ensure to her, even in the tomb, that the Emperor should remain for ever constant to her memory.

The charm was even more successful than she had expected, for Charlemagne would not allow her corpse to be buried, but had it embalmed, and carried it about with him for the space of eighteen years. Held, as in a trance, by the mystic influence of the ring, he passed his time watching beside the Empress's remains, and neglected the affairs of state and his duties as a ruler.

The cause of this strange fascination was at length made known to the Archbishop of Cologne by a divine revelation, and he took away the ring, whereupon the Emperor's eyes were opened, and he ordered the body to be interred. He then made the archbishop his chief counsellor, obliged him to leave his diocese and dwell always at the court, until the archbishop, seeing the wonderful power of the ring, and fearing to incur the censures pronounced by the Church against magicians, threw it away from him into a lake. Immediately the surrounding country became so attractive to the Emperor that he could no longer bear to leave it, and he built on the shores of the lake a splendid palace, where he lived for the rest of his life, and a church, where he was buried.

As if it were not enough to believe in rings possessing miraculous powers, the love of the marvellous so characteristic of the Middle Ages gave rise to the fantastic notion that it was possible to imprison beneath the gem set in a ring a familiar spirit which could thus be always at hand to inspire and guide its master. It was an easy way, and one that pleased the imagination, of accounting for the learning of men whose knowledge of such a recondite subject as mathematics, and whose taste for scientific research rendered them suspected in the eyes of their contemporaries of having sold themselves to the Evil One.

The belief seems to have existed even in the sixteenth century, for Thomas Heywood, in his 'Hierarchie of Blessed Angels,' relates that a certain Johannes Jodocus Rosa, a citizen of Courtray, held conference every fifth day with the spirit enclosed in his ring, using it as his counsellor and director in all his affairs and enterprises.

"By it he was not only acquainted with all newes, as well forrein as domesticke, but learned the cure and remedie for all griefs and

diseases: insomuch that he had the reputation of being a learned and expert Physitian. At length, being accused of sortilege or enchantment at Arnhem, in Guelderland, he was proscribed, and in the year 1548 the Chancellor caused his ring in the publique market-place to be layed upon an anvil, and with an iron hammer to be beaten to pieces."

The power of healing diseases was also reckoned among the many virtues which might be possessed by a magic ring, and those that were thus endowed were known to the ancients as Samothracian rings; for in the island of that name there was said to be a certain earth very efficacious against the bite of serpents and all poisons and plagues; and the minerals extracted from the same soil were believed to possess the same salutary quality.

Some of these medicinal rings were hollow and contained drugs, the influence of which was supposed to be conveyed to the heart by a vein called the *Salvatella*, communicating between the heart and the fourth finger of the left hand, which thence derived the name of *digitus medicinalis*.

These doctrines long retained many adherents even among the learned, and in the seventeenth century Fortunius Licetus, a professor of the University of Bologna, in his erudite treatise on rings, in which he has collected everything that was ever written on the subject, assures his readers that a ring made with a nail taken from the shoe on the left hind hoof of a Frisian horse is an efficacious remedy against gout, and that he knows it by experience.

He also recommends a ring made from the left hind hoof of the elk as a certain cure for epilepsy; for it was generally believed that the elk was subject to epilepsy, which attacked it at least once every day, and that it recovered from the fit by scratching its left ear with its left foot.

According to the same veracious and erudite authority, a ring carved from the tooth of a hippopotamus is a sovereign remedy for convulsions, and he quotes, among other writers, the equally learned Professor Johannes Heurnius, of Leyden, who states that he saw a soldier cure the bite of a scorpion by touching it with a ring made when the moon was in the constellation of the Scorpion, and carrying in its bezel a mixture of incense and gum mastic on which had been impressed the image of a scorpion.

Whereupon Licetus proceeds, with due solemnity and great abundance of quotations, to enunciate the reasons for which astrologers are justified in believing that a gem or a piece of metal acquires from the planet or constellation which is in the ascendant when they are dug out of the earth or fashioned by a workman, the same virtues which that planet or constellation bestows on those who are born under its influence; and he takes great pains to refute the erroneous opinions of those philosophers who imagine that the device engraved on the ring confers any efficacy upon it, for it is only an emblem of

the virtue which the ring has derived from the star which presided over its formation.

But though this superstition seems to have found adherents even so late as the seventeenth century among the professors of some universities who continued to write ponderous dissertations on it, as though it did not admit of any doubt, it had ceased to exist throughout the greater part of Europe, and more particularly in Italy, where the greater skill of the jewellers and goldsmiths had made of the ring an ornament to be prized for its artistic merit, instead of a talisman to be revered for its fancied magical properties.

It was in Italy too, and probably in Venice, that was invented in the fifteenth or sixteenth century the deadly *anello della morte*, a ring with which were connected no legends of superhuman manifestations, no tales of obedient genii or imprisoned demons ; a ring which was not made under the influence of astrological calculations or magical charms ; which was ostensibly a harmless trinket, but which might be looked upon as the abode of a spirit as insidious and malevolent as had ever been invoked by the incantations of a wizard. Outwardly it may have seemed to be but a thin golden circlet, sparkling with precious stones, or a massive signet-ring, bearing the arms of its owner ; but beneath the gem, set in its bezel, lay hidden a subtle poison, which a sharp steel point hollowed like the tooth of a serpent, could convey, by an almost imperceptible wound, into the blood or the unsuspecting victim to whom had been offered an apparently courteous and friendly clasp of the hand.

D. SAMPSON.



DEACONESS CHRIEMHILD'S ROMANCE.

BY SYDNEY C. GRIER, AUTHOR OF "PEACE WITH HONOUR," ETC.

I.

IN the little village of Brutli, clinging to the steep slopes of Mount Lebanon, there stands a vast building, half palace and half fortress. About thirty years ago, the princely Syrian family to which it had belonged having become extinct after centuries of religious wars and tribal feuds, the castle was fast falling into ruin and becoming a convenient quarry for the neighbouring peasants, when the Pasha granted the use of it to a German pastor and a small band of deaconesses, whose object it was to found in the Lebanon an offshoot of the great Institution at Königshof. The huge vaulted hall became the chapel, the innumerable smaller chambers were turned into schoolrooms, stillrooms, storerooms, dormitories and hospital wards, and the paved courtyard in the midst afforded a frequent refuge for the peasants and their cattle in times of disturbance. Nor was this all, for the sisters acted as the inn-keepers, as well as the doctors, teachers and nurses of the district, and while the humblest wayfarer was sure of a night's lodging and a meal, the courtyard was often filled with the horses and retainers of wealthy tourists from the West. Such was the case one spring morning, when Deaconess Chriemhild stood on the marble piazza, shaded by the fresh green leaves of the vines trained over it, and looked down at the scene of confusion below. In the disorderly crowd of baggage-animals a mixed throng of European servants, Syrian muleteers, and Turkish soldiers were struggling and swearing lustily, for their Serene Highnesses the Prince and Princess Johann Kazimir of Schwarzwald-Molzau, who had been detained for some time at Brutli by the illness of the Prince's brother, were to leave the Institution that morning, and it was already half-an-hour after the time appointed for starting.

The deaconess who stood watching the preparations was the youngest and by common consent the prettiest of the Brutli sisters. Her blue eyes matched the soft hue of her gown, and the hair brushed back beneath her white cap was of a rich ruddy gold. There were tears in the blue eyes at this moment, and the face lacked its usual expression of calm, and was quivering pitifully. There comes a time in the lives of most women when there is only one man in all the world, and to Sister Chriemhild there was one figure, and one alone, visible in the crowded courtyard, and she was looking at him for the last time. To other eyes than hers he would have appeared merely

as an insignificant-looking young man in spectacles, in no way worthy of the beautiful woman watching him, but he was Prince Ernst Albrecht of Schwarzwald-Molzau, a younger son of the famous house that traced its descent to Charlemagne, and she was the orphan daughter of a poor pastor in the Hartz. No words of love had passed between them, but she had read in his eyes that he loved her, and she knew that she loved him. What was worse, others knew it too. His sister-in-law, Princess Johann Kazimir, was one of the cleverest women in Europe, and her keen eyes had detected the state of Prince Ernst's feelings almost before he recognised it himself. She had said nothing, for she was far too skilful a diplomatist to precipitate matters by making a fuss, but she devoted herself to keeping her brother-in-law and Chriemhild apart. Once out of the Institution, he would be like wax in her hands, she told herself, and she took endless pains to cover the uneasiness, to call it by no harsher word, of her husband, who could scarcely bring himself to be civil to the low-born girl who was trying to entrap his brother. The Princess was even more polite, if possible, to Chriemhild than she had been at first. This very morning, having judiciously sent Prince Ernst to see to the loading of the horses, her Highness had been careful, when she was bidding farewell to the pastor and his wife and all the deaconesses, to thank Sister Chriemhild profusely for all the kindness and thought she had lavished on a perfect stranger, and to assure her that Prince Ernst would never forget any of his good nurses at Brutli. There was no need for angry words. Chriemhild Flecker was so immeasurably beneath the notice of the house of Schwarzwald-Molzau that nothing she might be foolish enough to do or think need affect for a moment the stately calm of its members.

The honeyed words of the great lady fell like so many lashes on Chriemhild's throbbing heart, and her fair face burned with painful blushes as she obeyed the whispered admonition of the senior deaconess, and betook herself to the embroidery-school, of which she was in charge this week. It was as she passed along the vine-shaded *lewan* that she had caught sight of Prince Ernst Albrecht in the courtyard below, and almost in spite of herself, paused for a last look at him. His back was turned towards her, and he did not look round, which was well, for he would have surprised in her eyes the look of love which it was the labour of her life nowadays to keep out of them, and which she hoped he had never detected there. She sighed as she looked at him, with the vain wish that he could have been born in a lower rank of life, then breathed a prayer for him, and passed on. But the gleam of her blue gown as she turned down a passage caught the Prince's eye, and he looked up to see her vanishing round the corner. Perceiving at once that his sister-in-law had purposely banished him in order to prevent his bidding Chriemhild farewell, he turned again to the packing for a moment, lest the inquisitive servants should guess the state of affairs. Putting a strong

constraint upon himself, he waited until the next horse was laden, then with a muttered excuse, dashed up the steps of the *lewan*, and down the passage to the room in which he knew Chriemhild was to be found at this hour. The embroidery class was going on, the gaily-dressed children sitting cross-legged on the floor among the brightly-coloured silks, and their teacher, in her dress of almost Puritan simplicity, moving from one to another.

"May I speak to you for a moment, sister?" asked the Prince, appearing at the door.

"I cannot leave the children, Highness," she replied nervously.

"Then I must speak in their hearing," he replied, with a firmness that showed Chriemhild she was not to escape, and giving the class into the charge of a monitress, she joined him at the door.

"Why have you avoided me?" he cried eagerly, seizing her hands in his. "What have I done that you should try to keep me at a distance?"

"Indeed, Highness," she faltered, "it was better."

"Better, when you know I love you? Cruel Chriemhild, to refuse me even the chance of bidding you farewell! Ah, my dearest, you can't have believed that I would consent to leave you without a word?"

"Consider your duty, Highness." Chriemhild was roused by his reproaches, and there was something of accusation in the glance she turned upon him, but he failed to observe this.

"I am considering my duty to you, dearest—to the woman I love, in spite of your unkindness to me. How I have missed you this last fortnight! The first part of my illness was delightful. When I had pneumonia before, I thought it was terrible, but now I look upon it quite as a friend. How could it be otherwise when Sister Chriemhild was in charge of the hospital? Your beautiful face was always before my eyes, your kind hands helped me when I was helpless, your voice would persuade me to obey the doctor's orders when no one else could. Do you remember, Chriemhild?"

"Oh, why recall all this?" she cried. "It is not right."

"Not right? Why not? I must say it. And when I was getting better I saw you gliding about the wards all day in that blue dress of yours, until I knew you must be tired out, and I used to tempt you to sit down on the window-seat to talk to me. You always brought out your knitting, so as not to waste a moment, unless I asked you questions about religion, and then you would get out your little Bible, and resolve my doubts for me, looking so pure and calm and sympathising, like an angel. How could I help loving you?"

"At least you could help telling me so, Highness," she said sadly.

"Don't call me Highness, dearest, I entreat you. Think of me as one of your pupils, if you like. I wonder whether you guess how often I have spent hours reclining on the *lewan* just outside your

schoolroom, and listening to you as you taught the orphans? I could not succeed in speaking to you, but at least I could see you now and then. Don't you think I deserve a reward for my patience? You can't doubt my love, Chriemhild?"

"Ah, Highness, I wish I could! Do you forget, when you say all this to me, that you are the betrothed to another woman?"

Prince Ernst looked astonished and horrified. "But I had no voice in the matter, nor had she," he said anxiously. "It was arranged for us in our childhood. No one could consider that I was really bound to her."

"But you are bound to her, and the matter does not rest with you. The Princess Adelheid of Weldart-Neuberg is your destined bride, and she has the right to expect you to marry her."

"But I have never even seen her. We do not love each other."

"You are bound in honour to marry her, Highness. Do you forget that, but for your illness, you would already have met the Princess? One of our sisters is a Molzauerin, and she has told me that this tour of yours was arranged in order that you might make the acquaintance of her Highness. You have no right to speak to me of love when she regards you as her bridegroom. If she were desirous of release, it would be a different matter, but if she is willing to marry you, you cannot draw back."

"Cruel Chriemhild!" he cried. "I need not ask if you love me. You could not talk in this way if you did."

"Not love you!" she cried with trembling lips. "I wish I did not! You have come between me and my work, almost—alas that I should have to say it!—between my soul and God. I scarcely dare look the other sisters in the face; they are so unsuspecting, they would never guess that I had had the presumption to love one so far above me. And the Herr Pastor—it is with difficulty that I force myself to the weekly interview with him, which I used to find so helpful. He does not guess why I ask him so earnestly to pray that I may be helped to do right; but I can never forget how shocked he would be if he knew of my foolishness, and I dare not confess it to him."

"Then you don't love me enough to face your friends' reproaches for my sake," said Prince Ernst doggedly.

"It is not that!" she cried. "It is because I love you that I can feel for Princess Adelheid. Shall I take away from another woman the man she loves, when it is she who has the first right to him?"

"Then if she will release me, you will let me speak to you again?"

"No, Highness, not even then. You are of a princely family. What would your relations say when they heard that you proposed to marry a pastor's daughter? Ah, when her Highness spoke to me just now, I saw how absurdly presumptuous my love for you must appear to her. She was so cold, so haughty—and yet it was not

quite that—she spoke as though I belonged to a different order of beings from herself. It is quite natural, too. I should only disgrace you ; I am not fitted for courts and grand doings, only for working quietly in the Institution, and her Highness is right. Your whole family would laugh at the idea of your marrying me. No, I can see no hope for us. I will not let you speak of love to me unless you have the permission of those whom it is your duty, one of the duties of your rank, to consider."

"But they will never consent," he said mournfully. "Ah, Chriemhild, do you know the plan I had in my mind ? I wasted my time sadly at the university, I fear, dreaming about literature and Liberal politics with a band of friends as romantic as myself, but one of the professors told me I had a distinct turn for science, and I have often thought I should like to study medicine. If I had the hope of winning you to animate me, I would begin the work to-morrow. What could be more beautiful than a life shared with you, and consecrated to the service of the sick and suffering ? My Liberalism has only been a matter of talk hitherto, but that would make it practical. And now you forbid me to try it, by imposing this hopeless condition upon me !"

"But it is only right. You owe a duty to your house," she said, her voice full of pity. His life of romantic dreaming seemed to have left him immeasurably younger than herself, and she was filled with a longing to guide and shield him in the future, not realising that such protecting care might not be the best thing for him. "Let us do our duty, Highness," she added more firmly. "There will come a certain amount of happiness with that, and as for the rest we must do without it."

"You must wish you had never seen me !" cried Prince Ernst. She looked at him with her eyes full of tears.

"Ah no, not that ! I would not have lost the last few weeks for anything the world can give. It has taught me a great deal. I think I know more of heaven now than I did three months ago."

"You are an angel already," cried the Prince. "Pray for me, since I am obliged to go down into the world again away from you. I will obey you, my dearest. The Princess Adelheid herself shall decide whether she will accept me or not, and I will not try to see you again without my uncle's permission. But it is very hard."

"Listen !" she said, holding up her hand. From the chapel came the sound of the sisters' voices, as they sped the princely guests on their way with Luther's Hymn. "*Das Reich Gottes muss uns bleiben*," said Chriemhild, repeating the last line ; "the kingdom of God must be left us."

"So the Highnesses are gone," said Sister Minna, coming into the deaconesses' parlour in the recreation hour, and finding two or three of the sisters there. "A good thing too !"

"Why, my sister?" asked Sister Julie, the oldest and wisest of the six deaconesses at Brutli.

"Well, if you think it is necessary to ask, it's because Sister Chriemhild has been so silly as to fall head over ears in love with Prince Ernst Albrecht."

"Is it kind to say this, sister?" asked Sister Julie.

"It's true, at any rate," returned Sister Minna snappishly, "and if you are not all blind, my sisters, you must have noticed it for yourselves. Did you ever hear of anything so ridiculous? I am a Molzauerin myself, and I know something of the princely family. They are as poor as they are proud, and there are so many of them that they must all have double names to distinguish them. But they won't let Prince Ernst marry Chriemhild Flecker. Pschutt! it's absurd. Do you know that the Grand-Duke's daughter, Prince Ernst's cousin, is married to the Crown Prince of Pannonia, and will be Empress one day, and that it's morally certain Prince Johann Kazimir will be chosen King of Moesia as soon as this Congress has finished sitting? Sister Chriemhild, indeed! a pastor's daughter, with nothing but a lot of yellow hair and a pretty face that she can call her own, to try and catch one of the Schwarzwald-Molzaus! Why, they would scorn an archduchess if she had a drop of burgher blood in her veins. Sister Chriemhild ought to have stayed at Königshof. A girl who can behave so foolishly is not fit to be sent out to Syria."

"She is very young," said Sister Julie, who had been trying in vain to stem the torrent of Sister Minna's eloquence, "but as both her parents are dead, and she has no relations at home who need her, surely she was the right one to send out. And she is a dear good girl."

"Good!" was Sister Minna's shrill comment. "Do you know, Sister Julie, that Prince Ernst is betrothed already to Princess Adelheid of Weldart-Neuberg? Sister Chriemhild knows, for I told her myself, and yet she goes on trying to captivate him."

"Oh, sister!" cried the other deaconesses reproachfully.

Sister Minna tossed her head.

"I suppose you would say that he is captivated already, my sisters? Well, that won't make any difference. Princess Adelheid is a great match, for her old godmother, the Grand-Duchess of Arragon, left her all her savings. Do you think the Schwarzwald-Molzaus will ever let the money go out of the family? Why, unless the Prince marries the Weldarterin, there's no provision for him, let alone the disgrace of breaking a betrothal."

"But need you suppose that Sister Chriemhild desires anything of the kind, sister?" asked Sister Julie. "She knows her duty, although she is so pretty and the youngest of us all, and I believe she will do it. You will see that the prince will return home, and marry the lady to whom he is betrothed, and Sister Chriemhild will

remain with us. I am sure she would be the last to wish to sow dissension in a noble family, or between bride and bridegroom."

"Then why did she make him fall in love with her?" demanded Sister Minna.

"She can't help her face, sister," said sister Luise.

"Prince Ernst would never have fallen in love with her for the sake of her face alone. She has led him on. Ah, my sisters, your life here is so sheltered that you forget the wickedness of the world, but I know what it is like beyond these mountains. And yet, do you see me taking advantage of my knowledge of affairs to captivate the Prince? No, indeed, although my dear father was one of the late Grand-Duke's privy councillors, and I may say that I was brought up in the Court. But a Schwarzwald-Molzau to stoop to Chriemhild Flecker, indeed! What next?"

"Love is a leveller, sister," suggested Sister Thekla, who was young and romantic.

Sister Minna sniffed, but her words were anticipated by Sister Julie.

"If Sister Chriemhild does indeed love the Prince, sisters, there is a time of great trouble before her. Let us do our best to comfort her, and pray that she may see her duty and do it faithfully, however hard it may be."

II

OWING to Prince Ernst Albrecht's illness, so much time had been lost at Brutli that it was impossible for his brother and sister-in-law to carry out their original plan of meeting the Prince and Princess of Weldart-Neuberg and Princess Adelheid at Beyrouth. They were obliged to journey southwards as far as Jerusalem before they succeeded in coming up with them, but after this the two families were practically inseparable. Princess Johann Kazimir had laid her plans with care, and she impressed upon her husband daily the share he was to take in carrying them out. He rebelled more than once when he found himself relegated continuously to the society of either the father or mother of the young lady, since it seemed to him that Princess Adelheid herself would be a far more entertaining companion, but his wife assured him that it was absolutely necessary to throw the two young people together.

"Ernst must be safely betrothed before we leave Jerusalem," she said, "and he is so full of his infatuation for that little deaconess in the Lebanon that he will contrive to slip out of taking any definite step unless it is forced upon him."

"But he never mentions her," objected the Prince. "Surely——"

"Oh, I knew you imagined he had given up all thoughts of her, and was merely meditating on sacred history or the Crusades when he rode along so silently day after day as we came down here. But

I know better; he was thinking of her. Naturally she would not give him up so easily, although he did tell me, when I pressed him, that she had bidden him farewell. It's just like that kind of people to pretend to be very proper and very self-sacrificing, but I haven't a doubt she expects him back before long. However, if he writes to her I shall hear of it. One of the sisters is a Molzauerin by birth—a very sensible, right-thinking person, daughter to a privy councillor of your late grandfather's—and she will give me warning if they attempt to begin a correspondence."

"They had better not, indeed!" cried Prince Johann furiously.

"Now you are not to interfere and spoil everything," said his wife. "Storming at your brother will only make him worse—perhaps drive him to enter into some sort of betrothal with the girl, and though it would not of course be binding without the sanction of the family, yet it might enable him to refuse to marry anyone else. If you will kindly leave things to me, and do as I tell you, I will engage that all shall come right."

"At least tell me how you intend to set to work," said the Prince, who had an intense respect, justified by long experience, for his wife's powers of management.

"Surely you must see," she replied rather sharply, "that Ernst would be quite willing to go through this tour without taking any opportunity of proposing to Adelheid, knowing that the informal betrothal arranged when they were children needs ratifying before it can be considered binding on either of them? But I don't intend him to escape in that way, and therefore I am throwing them together. My little cousin Adelheid is very outspoken, and she has been brought up to consider him as her bridegroom. When they are left to talk intimately day after day, it is certain that she won't be able to help letting drop some allusion to their engagement, and when she does speak of it, he must respond. He is still a man of honour, if he is mad, and he will not dare to remain hankering after the other girl, when he sees that Adelheid regards him as her absolute property."

"But just suppose that he also becomes outspoken for once in his life and confesses the truth to her?"

"Impossible, my dear! He knows that such a thing is quite out of the question. He could not acknowledge to a high-born, well-regulated young lady a passion for a burgher girl. For very shame he must accept the inevitable, and set the seal on his betrothal by proposing to Adelheid. That's all we want."

Modest as Princess Johann's desires were, they proved difficult to realise. In spite of all her schemes, Prince Ernst and Princess Adelheid became very good friends, and nothing more. It was with a kind of desperation that she arranged at last an expedition to Bethany, in the course of which she determined that the crisis must

take place. It was only to be expected, of course, that Princess Adelheid should declare her intention of walking with her father and Prince Johann, whereas Prince Ernst's recent illness rendered it necessary for him to ride with the ladies, and not even the charms of a new riding-habit could induce her to change her mind and wear it, or do more than ride a part of the way. Still, Princess Johann felt a touch of hopefulness when her wayward cousin suddenly slipped nimbly from her horse, as they returned along the stony hill-road, and called upon Prince Ernst to escort her to the top of the ridge that she might obtain a better view. Things were surely going right at last, thought Princess Johann, as her brother-in-law dismounted promptly, although with no special enthusiasm, and followed the despotic young lady, who needed no help, and quickly outstripped him in climbing. He looked at her as she sprang up the steep hillside in front of him, her lithe form displayed to advantage by the smartest of English tailor-made gowns, and contrasted her mentally with the girl he had left at Brutli. The comparison was not favourable to Princess Adelheid, but he did not guess that she, on her part, was distinctly disappointed in him. When he reached the summit of the ridge, panting slightly, she turned to him with a smile of good-humoured contempt.

"You are tired, Prince? Let us rest a little," and she flung herself down upon the grass.

He followed her example, and for a minute or two they were both silent, while her eyes wandered over the long panorama before them, with the walls and towers of Jerusalem golden in the sunset light, and the mountains of Moab rising purple in the background. Wondering not to hear any exclamation of delight and admiration from her companion, she glanced impatiently at him, to find his eyes turned towards the north, as if they were trying to pierce the gathering twilight in the direction of the Lebanon.

"How can you look away from this beautiful view?" she demanded, in her imperious way. "I know that you poetical people have strange fancies, but really one might think you had left in Syria all you hold dear."

Being a well brought up young lady, in spite of the brusqueness of her manners, Princess Adelheid had the grace to blush when she realised the audacious character of this remark; but Prince Ernst turned his dreamy eyes upon her and answered absently, "But that is just how it is, you know."

Seeing his companion look mystified and decidedly offended, he awoke to the knowledge of what he had said, and hastened to apologise.

"I entreat your pardon for speaking so thoughtlessly, Princess, but perhaps you will allow me to tell you something which I think you ought to know."

"Something about yourself? Do you mean that what I said is

really true—that you do love someone up there in Syria?" she asked rapidly.

"Yes, it is quite true." He was surprised and somewhat perplexed by her manner, for, instead of exhibiting the resentment he had expected, her face beamed with interest.

"Oh, do tell me about it! It sounds so delightfully interesting! Who is she—a Druse princess? Tell me all about her."

Very much astonished, Prince Ernst could only obey, and he related the whole story of his acquaintance with Chriemhild, unconsciously warming into eloquence as he neared the close.

"Oh, that is splendid, lovely!" cried Princess Adelheid, drawing a long breath, when he had told his tale. "It is just like a romance. And what is Sister Chriemhild like? Is she at all like me?"

Prince Ernst found it difficult to restrain a smile. "Sister Chriemhild reminds me always of the heroic German women, queens and prophetesses, of whom the old chronicles and the Roman writings tell us," he replied, in his gentle, rather sententious voice. "She is tall and blue-eyed and golden-haired, and there is a holy calmness about her that makes one think of saints and martyrs." He was gazing vaguely into the distance as he uttered this rhapsody, but now his eyes returned to his companion's face. "No, she is not in the least like you, Princess," and he sought for some comparison that might express his meaning without offence; "no more like you than the snow of Lebanon is like the Mediterranean in a breeze, or than this is like this." He gathered two flowers from the turf beside him, and held them out to her.

"Oh, I see!" she said, in a tone that expressed high gratification, for she could not feel annoyed by the comparison of herself to the glowing scarlet anemone, with its centre of intense black: while the star of Bethlehem, with its coronal of white blossom poised on the slender stalk, and its delicate shining petals, represented an ideal of womanhood which she might admire, but could never dream of making her own. She sat for some minutes pondering with a pleased smile the two flowers in her hand, while Prince Ernst wondered what he ought to say next, and how he could lay the situation before her without offence. It was she herself who gave him an opening at last.

"And what are you going to do?" she asked.

"That is for you to decide, Princess."

"For me! But how is that?" she asked, looking more gratified still. She was certainly getting more pleasure and interest out of her engagement this evening than she had ever done yet. It was delightful to feel that in some way she might influence the course of this idyll of true love.

"Well, I was anxious to ask you whether you still—whether you would rather—if you consider me bound—" stammered Prince Ernst, feeling it impossible to ask the important question in cold blood;

but seeing her puzzled face he put a strong constraint upon himself. "Is it still your pleasure, Princess, to fulfil the engagement into which our parents entered for us when we were children, and marry me?"

"After what you have told me?" she cried, in angry surprise. "Pray, what do you think of me, Prince? In the same breath you tell me that you love Sister Chriemhild and offer to marry me. I thought, of course, that you had already spoken to my parents, and that the arrangement for our betrothal was at an end."

"Pardon me, but I would not speak to anyone until I had ascertained your wishes. The matter is one for you to decide, for your parents naturally seek only your happiness. Sister Chriemhild insisted that I should consult your wishes absolutely, although I did not venture to tell her that I intended to lay the matter before you lest she should forbid it."

"And she wished you to marry me if I was willing?" asked Princess Adelheid, with wide-open eyes. "Now that is a thing I could never do, send the man I loved to another woman and let him marry her. She must be very good; but I am glad it was not as bad as you thought. I would not marry you for anything after what you have told me, and I shall tell my father and mother so. You see, it's not as if I was like Sister Chriemhild," she added hastily, when he tried to thank her. "I could not love you if I tried. You don't know how terribly disappointed I was when I first found out that you were not strong and a soldier, and how very disagreeable it has been since you came here. But I shall be only too glad to be your friend, and hers too," and she held out her hand to him with great magnanimity.

Prince Ernst shook hands with her gratefully, far too much relieved by her unconditional renunciation of him to object to the unflattering remarks which accompanied it. He felt it would be only polite to say something expressive of his gratitude for her kindness and his good wishes for her happiness, and at last managed to stammer out a hope that she might fill his place more worthily in the future. She accepted the suggestion quite complacently.

"Oh, yes!" she said. "You see, I have my godmother's money, so that I am sure to have plenty of offers; but I shall have some voice in choosing a husband this time. Fancy if all this had not happened, and I had found myself married to you! I don't know what I should have done with a husband who could not take long walks and climb hills with me. We should never have agreed, you know, and we should both have been miserable, so it's much better as it is. And it is so very delightful that it's broken off in this way. I am romantic, you know, very romantic, and I have always longed to take some part in a love affair. Sister Chriemhild is such a charming heroine, so good and so interesting. I suppose you will have to wait a long time, and conquer the hard hearts of all your

relations before you can marry her, won't you? Perhaps I shall be married before that time, and then I shall ask her to stay with me, and make my husband invite you, and that will be splendid."

"You are very good, Princess," said Prince Ernst, smiling in spite of himself at her absolute frankness. She was pleasant and amusing, and thoroughly kind-hearted, but what a contrast to Chriemhild! It seemed almost profanation to compare the two. Chriemhild, he said to himself, did little things greatly, carrying into the smallest daily duties a lofty religious principle which redeemed them from any meanness. This little vivacious creature, with her French manners and her English clothes, was of a different stamp altogether. There was a touch of vulgarity about her which destroyed all the greatness of her actions. He realised with shame that her persistent harping upon the subject made him less capable of appreciating even the benefit she had just conferred upon him. Where Chriemhild would have been silent, or have uttered a few words with difficulty, Princess Adelheid continued to pour forth these torrents of talk, which jarred cruelly upon her recreant *fiancé*. He had always felt that Chriemhild was far above other women, but now he knew that she was unapproachable so. While these thoughts were flitting through his mind, his companion scanned his face curiously.

"You don't like me," she said. "I believe you are thinking that Sister Chriemhild would not talk like this. But I am not at all her sort of girl, you see, though I do want to be kind to you both. So you will let me help you when I can, won't you? And now I think we ought to be going back to the city, or the gates will be shut. Let us race down!"

But the race so glibly proposed was too much for Prince Ernst, who gave up running very quickly, and climbed soberly down the hill, rejoining his impatient companion at its foot, and returning with her to Jerusalem, escorted by the guard of Turkish police that had been left by their elders for their protection. Arrived at their hotel, the two laggards proceeded to announce to their respective families that they had determined to break off their engagement—an announcement which did not meet with the smallest credit for some time, the strongest assurances of the pair being treated as nonsense. When, however, it was found that they persisted in their declaration that they would not enter into any solemn ratification of their betrothal, the hotel became the scene of much acrimonious contention. Prince and Princess Johann Kazimir did their best to instruct Prince Ernst in his duty, while Princess Adelheid's parents reasoned with her; and when it appeared impossible to make any impression upon either of them, their baffled guardians took counsel together. The worst and most perplexing feature of the rebellion was its unanimity. If either Prince Ernst or Princess Adelheid had shown the slightest sign of wavering, the elders, so they persuaded themselves, would have managed to coerce the other into submission,

but there was no yielding on either side. The Princess merely announced that she had had a long talk with Prince Ernst, and found that he would not suit her at all as a husband, and therefore she declined to marry him; while Prince Ernst told his brother and sister-in-law that as a man of honour he had felt bound to offer to fulfil the engagement made for him with Princess Adelheid, but since she was willing to release him, he did not intend to marry until he could ask Chriemhild Flecker, whom alone he really loved, to be his wife.

Of the two culprits, Princess Adelheid escaped the more easily. Her parents had witnessed her demeanour towards her *fiancé* with some anxiety as to the future happiness of the pair, and they knew that no difficulty was to be apprehended in finding a more eligible husband for her. But with Prince Ernst it was different. His brother stormed at and threatened him; Princess Johann Kazimir tried contempt and cajolery in turn, but neither was of any avail. They told him he would never be allowed to marry Chriemhild Flecker, and he replied that this might be true, but at least he would never marry anyone else. They pointed out to him the selfishness of depriving his family of the enjoyment of Adelheid's fortune, but he reminded them that all the cadets of his house would be eager to compete for her hand as soon as they knew he had withdrawn his claim to it. And, indeed, this thought had struck Princess Johann so early that she had already prepared a telegram to be despatched to the Grand Duke of Schwarzwald-Molzau, in case she found Prince Ernst obdurate, which ran thus:—

“The match between Ernst and the Weldarterin will not come off. Let Ludwig Franz or Otto Georg present themselves in his place. The Arragon money must not go out of the family.”

Prince Ernst knew as well as she did that this telegram, written in cipher, was reposing at the moment in his sister-in-law's desk, and the knowledge helped him to steel his heart against the reproaches showered upon him. He would not agree that it was disgraceful in him to think of marrying a burgher girl, even though to do so he must resign his rank and alienate his family. He was willing to wait, he said; he would employ his time in study or otherwise, as his uncle wished, but he would not consent to bind himself afresh to Princess Adelheid or any other. And at this point the matter rested, the two princely families parting with ill-concealed mutual resentment and dissatisfaction.

Princess Adelheid and her parents left Jerusalem very shortly after the rupture, and proceeded northwards to Beyrouth, in obedience to the commanding will of the young lady. She wished to go to Brutli and see Sister Chriemhild for herself, and her parents, as was usual with them, submitted their wishes to hers, instead of going to Alexandria by way of Jaffa, as they had intended. But the visit to Brutli did not afford the Princess the full satisfaction she had

anticipated. She saw Sister Chriemhild and spoke to her, but she could not force her to talk about Prince Ernst. When she told her what had passed between them, Chriemhild bent upon her a half-reproachful, half-astonished gaze, as if amazed to see that she could speak so lightly of giving up such a man. The princess was surprised, and even a little irritated. It seemed to argue some defect in herself that she had not been able to call up any affection for the man who had awakened such a wealth of unselfish love and devotion in another woman.

Sister Chriemhild would not talk of the future. She owned she was thankful that Princess Adelheid had released her lover, but she seemed to have no hope as regarded any reunion on earth. "The kingdom of God must be left us," she said, but she dared not anticipate any relenting on the part of the prince's family such as might allow them to marry. With this she was, apparently at least, content, and Princess Adelheid admired her patience and wondered at it. To her own more impetuous nature, this hopeless waiting would have been intolerable, and she could not understand the other's calmness. She herself in such a case would have poured out her sorrows into any sympathizing ear she could find, but Chriemhild preferred to maintain silence on the subject. Her love was too sacred to be breathed into any ear but her lover's, but the princess, while pitying her fervently, felt somewhat chilled by her reticence. They parted as very good friends, Chriemhild appreciating the generous kindness of the princess, although she could not repay her confidences in kind. She returned to her round of duties among the sick and the orphans, while Princess Adelheid accompanied her parents on their journey back to Germany.

III.

THE telegram despatched from Jerusalem by Princess Johann Kazimir, to warn her relations of the results of Prince Ernst's unexpected obstinacy, created no small stir in the Schwarzwald-Molzau family circle. To lose altogether the wealthy bride who had been so providently secured for him was not to be thought of, and the Grand-Duke took measures to avert the calamity. Quite by chance there happened to be several members of the house of Schwarzwald-Molzau staying at Ludwigsbad when the Prince and Princess of Weldart-Neuberg and their daughter passed through the place on their way home, and it was only natural that the prospect of such pleasant society should induce them to extend their visit. So liberal had the Grand-Duke shown himself in his preparations that Princess Adelheid might have made her choice from among five or six members of his family, but to his intense satisfaction she displayed no disposition to look further than his own eldest son, Prince Ludwig

Franz. He was handsome, active, and a soldier, a good shot, a good dancer, a good walker and climber—everything that appealed most strongly to the young lady's sympathies—and the happy result was not long in doubt. Before the visit to Ludwigsbad was ended, Princess Adelheid's betrothal to him was announced.

When by this means the Arragon money had again been secured in the family, the Schwarzwald-Molzaus were able to breathe freely once more. The most important business on hand having been arranged, they had now leisure to proceed to the task of breaking Prince Ernst of his foolish fancy. Prince and Princess Johann Kazimir, who had been keeping him under surveillance as a kind of state prisoner, lest he should make his escape to the Lebanon, received orders to bring their charge home, and returned with him some three months before the date fixed for the marriage of Princess Adelheid and the Hereditary Prince. Then his troubles began again. If his family had been bent on proving his capacity for suffering as a martyr in the cause of love, they could scarcely have conspired more fervently to make his life a burden to him. Everyone lectured him, from his old great-aunt, the widow of the late Prince of Weldart, who was the wisest and by common consent the most spiteful person in the family, to his cousin Prince Otto Georg, a young man whose soldierly ambitions had been blighted by the close of the Franco-Prussian war, and who revenged himself by living as much as he could in Paris.

When it was found that the most melting expostulations produced no effect, a family council was called, and Prince Ernst solemnly summoned before it. In the presence of his assembled relations he was reproved with all possible severity, and warned that he would never be allowed to contract a misalliance, that the family statutes rendered a marriage with anyone not of princely blood invalid, and that he had better make up his mind to yield at once and with a good grace. To all this he replied, with a mild obstinacy which his relations found extremely trying, that he was quite willing to resign his rank and title, but not Chriemhild, and he persisted in his unreasonable behaviour until their patience was exhausted. Moreover, they wished to go to Neuberg for the wedding, a ceremony at which it was out of the question that he should appear, and they solved the difficulty by the adoption of strong measures. They sent him off to a lonely castle among the mountains, and kept him there for a month in solitary confinement, under the care of as large a guard of soldiers as the principality could spare, and finding on their return from the festivities that severity had no effect, threatened to put him in a lunatic asylum. But this threat seemed even to its authors a little too melodramatic and old-fashioned to be safely carried out, and Prince Ernst only laughed at it, until, baffled by his persistence, they allowed him to return to Molzau for the home-coming of the bride and bridegroom, hoping that the sight might make him realise what he had lost.

The town was gay with flags and illuminations when Princess Adelheid, radiant with health and happiness, entered it at her husband's side. The Molzauers are intensely loyal to their rulers, as they may well be, since the proximity of the Schloss is the only apparent reason for the existence of the town, and a whole week of rejoicing was mapped out, probably with the benevolent intention of fortifying the bride beforehand against the ineffable dulness which would be her lot in her married life. On the evening of her arrival there was a grand banquet, and on the next day the Court ball took place—a highly impressive and wearisome function, without which no marriage in the princely family of Schwarzwald-Molzau has been considered complete from time immemorial.

At the appointed hour the bridal pair took their stand in the Hall of Mirrors, the principal state apartment of the Schloss, accompanied by all the members of their house, the Princesses standing on the right of the bridegroom, the Princes on the left of the bride, while at a respectful distance the Court officials and their wives, ranged in order of rank, were deeply interested spectators of all that ensued. Again and again the bride and bridegroom promenaded slowly round the hall, first together, then with each of the Princes and Princesses in turn, always bowing to all the other princely personages present which rendered the ceremony still more complicated and lengthy. It was in these circumstances that Princess Adelheid saw Prince Ernst again, as he stood conspicuous in his plain evening dress among the bright uniforms of his cousins. In the opinion of his family he was the one small speck which marred the gladness of the auspicious occasion, and he was left to stand alone, a mark for the curious glances and whispered remarks of the general company. It did not make his relations feel more kindly towards him that he did not seem even to perceive their contempt. His eyes wandered through the great hall, travelling vaguely over polished floor, mirrored walls, crystal chandeliers and draperies of primrose silk, but his mind was far away in the old castle on the slopes of Lebanon, with its marble terraces and ruinous turrets. The people around him were not flashing with diamonds or resplendent with gold lace, but wore the simple blue dress and white cap of the Königshof deaconesses, and among them, tallest, fairest, sweetest of all, was Chriemhild—Chriemhild moving softly through the hospital, comforting a dying man with Bible words, Chriemhild in the school, wrestling with the naughtiness of the unruly boys entrusted to the care of the sisters, Chriemhild in the garden, keeping a watchful eye upon the lunatics who were under her charge, Chriemhild kneeling in the church during the Quiet Hour. The music in his ears was not that of the Court band, but of the deaconesses' hymn, and he heard Chriemhild's voice repeating the last line, "The kingdom of God must be left us."

Roused from his reverie by a whispered reminder from the master
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of the ceremonies, Prince Ernst found that it was his turn to lead out the bride who might have been his. He knew that most of the spectators were regarding him with contempt, and the rest with pity, as they remembered that these festivities would have been in his honour but for his own unaccountable folly, and he smiled involuntarily as he offered his hand to Princess Adelheid. A gleam of mischief under her dark eyelashes showed him that she realised the humour of the situation as well as he, but the close neighbourhood of the rest of the family prevented any conversation on the subject. All that the bride could do was to throw out gay little remarks to him as they passed round the hall, emphasizing her words with her fan as if they referred to the company or the decorations, and speaking almost inaudibly.

"Do you know that you are very much changed?" she asked him.

"I hope it is for the better," he replied.

"I think it is. Your face looks stronger—not so dreamy."

"I am afraid I was dreaming only this moment."

"I don't mean that. You look more decided, as if you had a fixed purpose."

"And so I have, have I not?"

"Of course, and it is doing you good. These dear people have certainly no thought of it, but they are making a man of you."

"Many thanks, cousin."

"Oh, thank them, please! But, you know, I never expected you would hold out when I heard how angry they were, and I am so glad that you have."

"You must allow me to be glad I have disappointed you."

"Disappointed me? Satisfied me, rather. Sometimes I think you are like a knight out of a romance. No, you are better than that; you are becoming good enough for Chriemhild, and I am glad I know you."

"Do you know that those are the first words of encouragement I have heard since I parted from you at Jerusalem?" he asked.

"Don't speak so sadly. You know I am your friend. You can't think how sorry I am for you. If I can ever do anything at all to help you, you may be sure I will, for Chriemhild's sake."

The promenade came to an end, and Prince Ernst was obliged to rest content with this promise. Having failed to alter his resolution, his family left him alone for a time, and turned their attention to Chriemhild. If their lot had only been cast in the Middle Ages, when several good old methods of disposing of undesirable people were in vogue, there can be little doubt that her career would have been brought to a premature conclusion, and as it was, Princess Johann Kazimir lamented openly that this tiresome young person should have the bad taste to be a Protestant, thus rendering it impossible to get rid of her satisfactorily once and for all in a

convent. Since that was out of the question, the Princess, by the wish of the Grand Duke, wrote to the pastor at the head of the Brutli Institution, begging him to arrange a marriage for Chriemhild with some respectable person in her own rank of life, promising to provide a handsome dowry for her. The pastor did his best in this direction, suggested various eligible young men at Beyrouth and elsewhere, and even advised Chriemhild strongly to accept one of them if she could possibly bring herself to do so, but to the mention of each would-be suitor she opposed the same reply, that she had given her love to Prince Ernst and could not recall it. On this the pastor, urged on by the pastorin, who had embraced very strongly Sister Minna's view of the case, took courage to speak seriously to Chriemhild, asking her whether she could reconcile it with her conscience thus to alienate Prince Ernst from his family and all his friends by persisting in maintaining the validity of a betrothal which they declined to recognise. To this she replied that she had given the Prince his freedom, and had refused to consider herself betrothed to him, winding up by asking the pastor whether he really thought it would be right for her to marry a man she did not love, merely in order to help Prince Ernst's relations out of their present difficulty. The pastor was a well-meaning man, and the question nonplussed him, divided as he was between his ideas of right on the one hand and his desire to oblige the princely family of Schwarzwald-Molzau on the other, so that when he dismissed Chriemhild he disclaimed all responsibility in the matter, and bade her act as her conscience dictated.

One more effort did Princess Johann Kazimir make on behalf of her husband's distressed family before washing her hands of the affair, for the Balkan State of Moesia had formally invited Prince Johann to become its sovereign, and he and the Princess were on the verge of quitting Molzau with their little daughter for their new capital of Eusebia. This time the Princess wrote to the authorities of the parent Institution at Königshof, conveying an offer on the part of the family to support a new mission in a different part of Syria, of the spiritual destitution of which they had heard heart-rending accounts, if Sister Chriemhild, of whose high character and devotion to her work they had heard from several quarters, might be given a prominent place among the deaconesses who would superintend it. It is true that this part of Syria was considered very unhealthy, especially for Europeans, but the princely benefactors could not be expected to be acquainted with the fact, and no one could suspect them of any sinister intention in their offer. But it so happened that Königshof had too much in hand to undertake any fresh work just then, so that the generous proposal was declined with much regret on both sides.

Since the Queen of Moesia had so signally failed to dislodge Chriemhild from her position, the rest of the family devoted them-

selves once more to Prince Ernst. On the principle of driving out one disease by another, they sent him to Paris with Prince Otto Georg, instructing the latter to do all in his power to make his cousin forget Chriemhild, even to the extent of entangling him irretrievably with any lady of noble birth and suitable fortune, whatever might be her age, history or nationality, who might be willing to marry him. Prince Otto Georg pledged himself to succeed, and Prince Ernst found no mercy at his hands, but his love kept him safe even in the furnace of temptation to which he was exposed. He passed through it unscathed, the remembrance of Chriemhild remaining with him like a guardian angel, and his cousin learned to regard him with curiosity, not unmixed with a dawning of respect for the man who could resist so strenuously the seductions to which he himself had long ago succumbed. Tired out at last by Prince Ernst's patient firmness, he relinquished the task of which he was now more than half ashamed, and took him back to Molzau with an added shadow in his gentle eyes, and in his mind memories of iniquity which he loathed, but could never wholly lose. Once more the family assembled in solemn conclave to consider his case, and pronounced him incurable. From henceforth they would make no more efforts to alter his determination. He would not yield, but neither would they. In the course of time Chriemhild might die or marry, or the lapse of years might blot her image from his mind, and all would yet be well. For the present he should be severely let alone. Prince Otto Georg's half-derisive intercession on his behalf was treated merely as an ill-timed joke, and no one ventured seriously to suggest that such persistent constancy deserved to be rewarded. Even Princess Adelheid, his only friend, did not dare to raise her voice in his favour, lest she should do more harm than good; but she was on the watch to help him, and at last her woman's wit laid hold of the very opportunity on which she could do it most effectually.

The first child of Prince and Princess Ludwig Franz had been a daughter, to the great disappointment of the Grand-Duke and his subjects; but shortly after the return of the two Princes from Paris the city of Molzau was almost beside itself with rejoicing, for twin sons had been born to the Hereditary Prince and Princess. A little later the baptism of the infant Princes was made the occasion for a ceremony of great magnificence, in the course of which Princess Adelheid received the congratulations of the Court and the respectful felicitations of the inhabitants of the city and the duchy on the recent happy event. It was the bounden duty of everyone who had any connection with the princely house, or held any government or municipal appointment, to appear at the Schloss, from the Grand-Duke himself to the grand-ducal chimney-sweep, and assist at the reception which followed the religious service. The two youthful Princes were exhibited and admired, carried on cushions by elderly

ladies belonging to the highest nobility, whose ministrations were evidently far less appreciated by their charges than those of the two buxom nurses in gay peasant costume who followed the progress of the princely infants with anxious eyes. Many fine speeches were made and loyal sentiments uttered, and many cups of coffee and other beverages consumed, albeit their quality was not of the finest, for the Court of Molzau keeps its best rigidly for royal visitors and occasions of international importance. When all the officials and members of deputations had departed, and only the members of the family were left in the great marble saloon, the Grand-Duke approached Princess Adelheid, and stooping with paternal condescension, kissed her on the forehead.

"Let me entreat you, my dear daughter, to grant me the pleasure of fulfilling some wish of yours in celebration of this joyful day and to testify the delight I feel in my grandsons."

"Any wish of mine, grandpapa?" asked the Princess, with a smile, while her face flushed eagerly.

"Any wish of yours, my daughter, would, I am sure, be only too moderate for me to grant. Command me for anything within the bounds of possibility."

"Then please allow Cousin Ernst Albrecht to marry Sister Chriemhild," said the Princess promptly. The relatives standing near looked horror-struck, and even the proud grandfather was taken aback, while Prince Ernst felt a genuine pang that Adelheid should have risked the loss of her father-in-law's favour in her effort to serve him. The Grand-Duke, however, turning the request over in his mind, perceived quickly that it offered a way of escape from a very awkward deadlock. It was both unpleasant and a piece of bad policy to have Prince Ernst hanging about the Court and refusing to embrace any opportunity of benefiting his family by a good marriage when he might be got rid of permanently at a very small expense, and a graceful termination given to a regrettable episode.

"You promised, grandpapa," said Princess Adelheid, looking up with anxious eyes.

"I did, my daughter, and it gives me great delight to fulfil this request of yours. I will intimate to my family that it is my pleasure that, on resigning his rank and entering into the engagements proper in such cases, my dear brother's second son, Prince Ernst Albrecht shall be permitted to ally himself with the person he desires."

"You have made me far happier than I have been for a long time. No favour to myself could have pleased me half so much," said the Princess earnestly; and then the Court physician, noticing her changing colour, declared that it was his duty to advise the Hereditary Princess to retire to her private apartments.

The astounding news of the Grand-Duke's surrender spread quickly through the Court, creating a world of astonishment, but surprising no one more than Prince Ernst himself. Suddenly, from

being merely a dim and distant impossibility, happiness was brought within three weeks' journey for him. The preliminaries were quickly arranged. A deed was drawn up, to be signed on the marriage day, by which Prince Ernst withdrew, on behalf of himself and his descendants, from any pretensions to the succession to the duchy, and agreed to relinquish his title and his claims on the family estates, and live hereafter as a private person. There was little else to be done, for the Schwarzwald-Molzaus in general showed themselves more than eager to get rid of their black sheep, deputing Prince Otto Georg to accompany him to Brutli and ensure the due performance of the requisite formalities. But before Prince Ernst left Molzau he felt obliged to go and thank the Hereditary Princess for her championship of him. Adelheid received him with a torrent of jests, intended to hide the emotion which the thought of his long-tried love and of his approaching meeting with Chriemhild awoke in her romantic little heart. But when he had succeeded in putting his thanks into words and was about to leave her, she became suddenly gentle and serious.

"Give my love to Sister Chriemhild," she said, "and tell her that I often think of her. I know she did not care much for me, but I always regard her as a saint. Tell her that in a year or two I shall make Ludwig Franz take me to Syria again, and we shall pay you a visit in your little house at Beyroud, and I shall make friends with her while you are at your studies."

"I can answer for Chriemhild that she will be delighted to see you, cousin," he replied, and took his departure, still with the same appearance of longing to say more than he could manage to utter.

"There goes the happiest man in Germany," said the Princess, as she watched him from her window. "It must be nice to be loved like that," she added, with a little sigh. "But how silly I am!" and she dashed away the dimness from her bright eyes. A minute later, in obedience to one of her sudden impulses, she was running through the intervening suites of rooms to pay a surprise visit to the nurseries, where she distracted the nurses by insisting on lifting her babies out of their cots and kissing them.



THE BALLAD OF THE HARPER AND THE KING'S
HORSE.

IN SIX CANTOS.

BY JOHN LARGE.

I.

ONCE long ago—now many a year
Hath come and passed away—
There lived in merrie England deare
A merrie king who loved good cheere
And jolly companie.

A nodding plume of the bonnie broom
He wore in his helmet high;
And a goodlie horse the good king rode,
As ever was horse by king bestrode.
Quothe he, with laughing eye :

“Who dares to steal this horse of mine,
I swear by the broom—a goodlie sign—
And I care not who he be
So he rideth royally—
Who dares to steal this horse,” quothe he,
“To lead him forth past guard and groom,
Past locks and bars from his stall of stone,
And doeth the same to all unknown—
I promise him true, by the bonnie broom,
He shall forgiven be :
And more, a goodlie estate shall win
If he ride him back to me.
For to mount yon steed I count no sin,
If any man *dare*,” quothe the merrie king.
“But hark ye well,” quothe he,
“There hangs a penalty.

“Whoe'er be caught in the thieving act—
It mattereth not to me—
On his bare thieve's back shall he be well thwacked,
And his head shall severed be,
And shall hang in the market place on high
Where every curious passer by
Or gaping clown may see.”

Then a shout went round the groaning board—
For dined full well had he—
And every courtier slapped his thigh,
And rocked, and laughed, and winked his eye,
And said, with many an indrawn sigh,
“How merrie the king can be !”

II.

THE HARPER AND THE HERMIT.

Across the border in fair Scotland,
 Away from the busie towne,
 A harper wandered harp in hand,
 And sang with head cast down.
 His hair was gold in the mornynge sunne,
 His cheeke like the rose was redde,
 But his heart was sad, and the song he sung
 Would have raised the sleeping dead.

The hawk swooped low, the trout leaped high,
 The beasties all drew near—
 The hermit, telling his beades, passed by,
 That harper's song to hear.
 His voice was clear as the convent bell,
 Sweeter than bird-note shrill,
 His harp twanged strong to his wondrous song,
 And rang from hill to hill.

The hermit smiled, for he knew full well
 Such song was not in vain ;
 That its sad, sweet power, and its magic spell
 Were drawn from a soul in pain.
 "Come hither, thou harper fair, I pray,
 Why sing where none may hear?
 The busie town is so far away—
 Thy purse is light, I fear.

"Why leave the court and merry jest,
 Where fair maid's hearts be won?
 What seek ye on the mountain's crest
 From morn till set of sunne?"
 "I sing for neither gain nor gold,
 I sing not for renown ;
 I better love these craggies bold,
 Than yonder busie town.

"I sing for love of all sweet things
 Beneath the skies above ;
 Betide me weel, betide me woe,
 I sing alone for love.
 A maid dwells in a Scottish tower
 More fair than tongue can tell ;
 I met her in her rosy bower
 In faith, she loves me well.

"I wooed her in her shaded bower,
 This maid of high degree,
 Alas ! high in her father's tower
 She weeps for love of me."
 The hermit laughed until he shook :
 "Beshrew my soul !" cried he ;
 "Go wed the lass with bell and book
 Since so she loveth thee."

"Nay, nay, not so," the harper cried,
"Such gladness may not be;
Her father is a man of pride
Who loves not minstrelsie.
He sweareth loud, with curse and frown,
Who hath nor gold nor land,
Let him be knight, or king, or clown,
He shall not have her hand."

"Now well-a-day, and by my troth,
I'm loth to see thee sad:
Go steal the king's horse Brownie forth,
Like any honest lad;
And win the wager of the king,
To get thee gold and land,
Then buy a bonnie golden ring,
And claim the maiden's hand."

"Yea, that were well," the harper cried,
"But if I lose my head,
I lose beside my bonnie bride,
How then shall I be wed?"
The hermit stroked his beard: "I think
I've heard it said," quothe he,
"A nod is good as any wink,
To a horse that cannot see."

"Now I will set a wonder forth
That well may make thee stare.
Go ride the roan to south, or north,
Full forty miles from there;
Nay, fifty or a hundred, still,
Her mother-love her guide,
She'll find again this grassie hill,
And the brown colt at her side.

"Now hast thou wit, or hast thou none,
Love speed thee well, I think
Thou'll take a ride, and win a bride,
Let this be nod or wink."
The harper paused and shook his head,
He shook it once and twice;
Then laughed he long and laughed he loud,
But did not shake it thrice.
"I thank thee well, kind priest," he cried,
"Both nod and wink I see,
And I will ride and win my bride,
My maid of high degree."

III.

THE WAGER.

That night to busie Strivling towne
The harper, musing, hastened down,
And there that night he played
For dame and squire, and capering clown,
For knight and blushing maid.

“Again, again,” with might and main
 The listeners cry. “Again the strain,
 Good harper, harp and sing.
 Thou singest sweeter than a bird ;
 Such harping, sure, was never heard
 By courtier or by king
 As thine.” Again he twanged the string,
 And made the heavy rafters ring
 In answer to the song.
 Then to Sir Charles Sir Roger spake—
 A doughty knight and strong—

“Before such music I could make
 On harp or viol, lyre or lute,
 I'd sooner steal the king's horse Browne
 Than I'd attempt to do't.”

“Yea !” quothe Sir Charles : “To crack a crown,
 To wield a sword, or sack a town,
 Were easier for me.
 I'd sooner ride o'er hill and down,
 Good harper, on the king's horse Browne,
 Than I would harp with thee.”

“Ye speak me fair,” the harper cried,
 While twinkled merrilie
 His clear blue eye. “And I will ride
 To gay Carlisle through Strivling towne,
 Well mounted on the king's horse Browne—
 What will ye wager me ?”

“Five plows of land,” Sir Roger cried,
 “That in Scotland ye may abide
 Whene'er it pleaseth thee.”
 “Five thousand pounds in good red gold,”
 Sir Charles replied, “that thou may'st hold
 Wherewith to make merrie.
 If thou dost win, thou ne'er shalt lack
 A velvet doublet to thy back,
 Nor goodlie companie.
 Yet, have a care,” cried they. “Beware the penalty !”

“Farewell, farewell,” the harper cried,
 “I take the wager down.
 May-hap, e'er next we meet, I ride,
 Like any knight, well set astride,
 The merrie king's horse Browne.”

“Beshrew my heart ! I fear he'll do't !”
 Then spake Sir Charles's dame :
 “I would ye had not set him to't
 With greater hope of gain.”
 “Good lack ! He'll lose his curly head
 If he doth try,” a maiden said ;
 “Pray call him back again.”
 “Nay, nay,” Sir Roger cried, “let be ;
 A canny shrewd head waggeth he.
 I' faith, sweet lass, he'll win.”

IV.

THE KING'S HUNT.

From gay Carlisle one fair bright morn,
With noise of whoop, halloo and horn,
With baying hounds, with squire and knight,
And courtiers gay, and dames bedight
With nodding plumes and costumes bright
Of gold, and green, and royal blue,
And copper lustre, crimson hue,
And silver cord and tassel, whew !
A gayer sight ye ne'er shall view
Than when King Harry went to hunt
On prancing Browne, with fat Sir Blunt
Beside him on a steed of black.
But when at eve they ambled back
Ye should have seen the crowd, good lack !
For all were fagged, and mud-bespattered ;
And some gay gowns were sadly tattered ;
Some lagged behind with sorry pace,
As they were losers in the race ;
But good King Hal is merrie still,
For did not he the great stag kill ?—
Ah ! noble deed, to quench its life !
Success rides well, whate'er the strife.

“ Up, warden, ho, fling wide the gate,
The king and all his cortége wait !”
The gay king cried.

“ The steward call.

Sweet dames, be not so sorry all.
Beshrew a pack of frowning jades !
Ride on and seek your tiring maids.
Then meet us in the banquet hall
With sparkling eyes to grace a feast,
Where, look ye, yonder doughty beast
Shall feed ye well in any case,
For leading of ye such a chase.”

The servants flew like hens beheaded,
The stag they dressed, the onions shredded,
And fires were built, and cranes were hung,
And roasts and joints were quickly swung,
With each a boy to baste and turn
Lest any of the meat should burn.
The cook grew red, and hot, and flurried,
As round his heels the scullions scurried.

At last with much of din and clatter
The feast was set ;
Around the board with merrie chatter
The guests were met.
Upon a huge old brazen platter
Before the king
The antlers of the stag were spread,
With oak-leaves green
Bedecked, and dangling ribbons red.
Thus be it seen

How fall the mighty. Thus the pride,
The glory of the forest died,
Ignoably severed bone from bone
To grace a feast. The cook alone
Was praised, who served the gravies hot,
He, and the king, the arrow shot
That laid the mighty monarch low—
King against king.

“What! steward ho!
Why silent is our banquet hall?
Where are the pipes? The fiddlers call!”
Burst forth King Hal. With cringing pace
The steward came.

“An’t please ye’r Grace,
The players all are gone to bed
As drunk as loons,” the steward said.
“They played their pieces out of tune,
And swore the hunt was o’er at noon.”

Enraged, King Harry stamped his feet.
“Go turn those players in the street.
‘An’t please my Grace! I’ll teach thee, lout!
To please my Grace when I am out.
Thou’st let them at my casks I see,
And thou shalt pay the penalty.’
But e’er these angry words were spoken,
The silence of the hall was broken;
Without, a strain rose loud and clear.
“The harper of the hills is here,”

Then called aloud
The listening crowd.

“Now, that’s well said,” exclaimed the king.
“We’ll hail him. He shall harp and sing
To help us merry make with-all.”
Then from the balcony King Hall
Called loudly to the harper man:
“Hither, good fellow, know’st thy king?
It is our will ye harp and sing
For us within our banquet hall.
Thy merrie music’s all we lack
To give a relish to our sack.”

“Yea, Sire.” He doffed his bonnet blue;
“I am your subject, leal and true.
Your will, good Sire, and mine are one;
But I have rode since rise of sunne—
See how my good roan hangs her head—
First I would see her stalled and fed.
The kindly man, you’ll own, at least,
First shows his kindness to his beast.”

“Well said, well said!” King Harry cried;
“Go call my groom. She shall be tied
Within the best stall in my stable
Beside my Browne.” Then back to table
Sped king and guests.

In walked at last
The harper, and his clear eye cast

From end to end of the vast hall ;
Then with his long arm reaching out,
He struck his harp, and forth a rout
Of merrie notes leaped, upward glancing,
They filled the hall, and gaily dancing,
Dissolved in melodies entrancing ;
Then softer echoes sighed and trembled,
Among the listening guests assembled.
Ah ! well he played, that harper man.
He sang the sorrows of his clan—
Sang of fair Scotland, and disaster—
Of England's glory, and her master,
Then, as his notes flew fast and faster,
Of war, of pleasure, and of love,
Then of the chase ; then loud above
The sounds of voices and of laughter,
With mountain thunders shook each rafter ;
Then dropping to a smoother measure
He still played on at his own pleasure,
Till, striking low, soft, slumb'rous chords
He slowly played. The drunken lords
Grew drowsy, and the monarch's head
Began to nod, and to his bed
Each guest retired as he was able,
While some lay sprawled beneath the table.

Then in the servants came in hords
From cook to grooms of the king's stable—
Devoured the feast, and cleared the boards,
And drank the wine as they were lords.
Alas ! alas ! for human kind,
They drank till they were deaf and blind.
The harper smiled, and played, and waited,
Until the last drunk loon, belated,
With limp limbs hanging, snored aloud.
Ignoring, then, the motley crowd,
He, from the girdle of the groom,
Deftly withdrew the keys ; the room
He quitted,
And in the great lock of the stable
The great keys fitted.
Within the darkness, black as sable,
Stood Browne, the lordly horse, and there
Fast by his side the sleek roan mare.

He bridled them and saddled them
And tied their reins together,
And on the highway started them,
With neither bar nor tether.
" Now go your way," the harper cried,
As off they galloped side by side ;
" Now go your way, my gentle roan,
I wot you'll not soon parted be,
So both will have good companie.
For me, I'll in and lay me down,
For sleep is sweet, to king or clown."
But first he locked the stable door,
And placed, as they had been before,

Within the dull groom's girdle browne
 The ponderous keys. " 'Tis well," quothe he,
 "That since the good king's horse is gone
 The door should fastened be."

V.

THE SEARCH.

In merrie Carlisle, at the court of the king
 Had happened a wonderful, marvellous thing ;
 You never did see what a tumult was there,
 The grooms were all running and tearing their hair ;
 They searched all the stables—through yard, loft and stair,
 In highways, in byways, in paddock, in lane,
 They blustered, and shouted, and hunted in vain.
 The servants all scurried as they were insane,
 Each housemaid, or scullion, groom, cook or valet,
 For why ? The king's horse had been stolen away.

'Twas an uncanny trick, and it savoured of magic,
 'Twould be sure in the sequel to prove something tragic,
 For there hung the keys, at the side of the groom,
 Each marked with the sign of the helmet and broom.
 As wan as a ghost just out of his tomb
 He shivered and shook, and declared 'twas a witch,
 A sprite or magician, he couldn't tell which ;
 Else how could the horse through the key-hole be drawn ?
 For with no other opening, this must be the case,
 As plain to be seen as the nose on your face—
 Spite of locks, bars and bolts, the king's horse was gone.

At last the king rose,
 And put on his clothes,
 And bathed his red eyes,
 And his cherry-red nose.
 He was moody and cross,
 And he called for his horse—
 His breakfast they brought
 As a matter of course.

The servants all shook with a terrible awe
 When a frown on the brow of King Harry they saw.
 They said without doubt that the grooms would be hung,
 That they all would be beaten, or have their necks wrung,
 Or be ordered away
 With no farthing of pay.
 Alas ! and alack !
 What a terrible day !

So gathered together in knot and in ring
 They beckoned, and whispered. This horrible thing,
 Oh, what man among them would dare tell the king ?
 When just at this juncture the harper appeared—
 It was marvellous then how fast the sky cleared ;

With his keen ready wit, and his sunshiny face,
For to break the ill news, just the man for the place.
So close at his heels,
Like a parcel of eels,
Or school of red herring
The fisherman deals,
They followed the harper, and straight to the king
He led the procession, the story to bring.
How, all in the dead of the darksome night—
When dread spirits roam in a sulphurous light—
When gray warlocks dance, and witch fires burn bright—
Some rogue of a thief had entered, and lo !
The king's horse was gone, and the sleek roan also.
Then loud the king spake till the servants all quailed,
He swore at the grooms, at the courtiers he railed,
He thundered his orders till breath and words failed.
"Nay, Sire," quothe the harper, "this trouble is mine.
Since all the good steeds in the country are thine,
And all the green pastures from here to Land's End ;
Hence, if he be found, more the matter to mend,
He'll be found, it is plain,
On thine own fair domain,
While for me, I may ne'er see my good roan again."
Then down on his knees the bold harper man fell,
And besought for the grooms and the servants right well
Of the king clemency.
"I have heard said," quothe he,
That the wisdom of fools may confound the great ;
Hence, though little my wit, and empty my pate,
Call back all the searchers, and give me, I ask,
Sole charge for three days of this sorrowful task.
With my harp in my hand
I will go through the land,
For none will suspect a poor innocent harper
Of mingling with music the tricks of a sharper."
"Thou'rt a knave of good spirit, and now, by St. Biddle,
I give thee three days for the solving this riddle ;
And if on the third day by six of the dial
Thou dost not appear, I will have up for trial
These clowns, every one ;
And if, by St. Rose,
On the fourth thou'rt not here, like a parcel of crows
They shall hang in the market e'er evening shall close."
So answered the king, and the harper with speed
Set forth on his search for the merry king's steed.

VI.

THE RETURN, AND THE REWARD.

O, sweet was the breath of the morning,
And blythe were the bird notes shrill,
And light was the heart of the harper man
As he trudged over moorland and hill.

For he thought of the lass in the Scottish tower—
 And he thought of the tryste in the maiden's bower—
 He thought of Sir Charles, and the promised gold—
 And Sir Roger's gift of a Scottish hold—
 All these and the prize of the king beside,
 And the golden ring that should bind his bride,
 And he hastened his steps toward Striviling towne
 For to win them all with the king's horse Browne.

Lo, there, as he neared the paddock gate,
 He saw the old hermit stand and wait,
 Soberly clad in cowl and hood,
 Telling his beads as a good priest should ;
 And lo, in the paddock the steeds, all three,
 The roan, and the colt, and the horse. “ Pardee !
 For to help my fellow I count no sin,”
 Quoth the priest, as he solemnly fastened them in.

The harper bowed low as the priest passed by,
 And blessed the good man, with a tear in his eye ;
 Then hastily mounting the king's horse Browne,
 He galloped away into Striviling towne.
 There sat Sir Charles, and Sir Roger bold :
 One gave him the land, one paid him the gold ;
 Right willingly paid they their wagers down
 When they saw him gallop through Striviling towne.

Then hied he straight to the Scottish tower,
 And kept his tryste in the maiden's bower ;
 There touched he the harp-strings low and sweet,
 And the sound gave wings to the maiden's feet.

“ Now, lass, don your mantle and soft snood of gray,
 And gather your kirtle, we'll mount and away.
 Now, Browne, goodly steed, be ye steady and fleet,
 For never before bore ye burden so sweet.
 I wot, ne'er before bore ye burden so fair
 As my white rose, my lass, with her long braids of hair.”

O, sweet was the breath of the evening wind,
 And clear was the western sky,
 And bright were the stars as they leaped in sight,
 And pale was the moon on high.
 And glad was the heart of the harper man
 As he called at the palace gate :
 “ Up, warder ho ! Fling the portals wide !
 Will ye have the king's horse wait outside ?
 Will ye have the king's horse wait ? ”

Then loud was the shout in the courts below,
 And loud in the palace hall ;
 And glad was the heart of the merrie king,
 When he heard the harper call.
 O, the heart of the harper beat high and fast
 As he kneeled at the feet of the king at last ;
 And pale was the face of the gentle maid
 As she heard the words which the harper said.

"Oh, not for the gold nor the land, my king,
Have I risked my life," he cried,
"But to wed this lass with a golden ring
Who standeth here at my side.
For love of the light in her blue, blue eyes
Would I win the estate—thy promised prize—
For the smile on her lips, and the touch of her hand,
I kneel at thy feet and beg the land.
I stole the horse like a very thief,
I rode him back like a lord,
And now I ask, that thou, like a king,
Redeem thy promised word."

"Thou'rt a doughty knave,
And thy heart is brave,"
Cried the king with a burst of laughter ;
"And here with my sword
I create thee a lord,
Sir Harper, for ever after.
And thine the estate forever shall be,
For well hast thou won it, i' faith!" cried he.
So there was a feast at the court of the king,
And the harper and lassie were wed with a ring.



THREE NOTABLE LADIES.

BY JAN WINN.

IT would be interesting to know why the Church in its wisdom has always been so much more prone to canonise men than women. For every woman who has a place in the calendar, there are half a score of men at least. Yet who would venture to maintain, in this our day, that men are, or ever have been, ten times more saintly than women? Clearly it is a case of flagrant injustice. The devil's advocate has always had the sympathy of the Court on his side when the claimant, with whom he was dealing, was a lady.

It is a remarkable fact, therefore, considering the difficulties against which they have had to contend, that there should be one month in which no less than five women have had special days set apart in their honour. All the five are, of course, saints of the first rank, and three of them, St. Colette, St. Jane of Valois, and St. Clare of Rimini, are also interesting personages, who played more or less of a rôle in the world.

St. Colette was certainly a notable woman, one with a clear head and strong will, and a marvellous power of making that will prevail. Her most marked characteristic was sturdy common-sense, and this being the case, were she alive to-day, she would make short work of the many strange wild legends that have grown up around her memory. She was French by birth, but whether noble or plebeian, is a matter of dispute, the name even of her parents being unknown.

She was born in the latter half of the fourteenth century, and passed her early days with the Beguines—a community of women supposed to devote themselves to good works. After a time she left the Beguines, holding that their rule of conduct was less severe than it ought to be, and she joined the Third Order of St. Francis.

A very short experience of life in their convents showed her, however, that lax as the Beguines might be in their ways, the Franciscaines were infinitely laxer. The style in which many of them lived, indeed, was a public scandal.

Now St. Colette was by instinct a reformer; no sooner did she detect an abuse than her one thought was how to sweep it away, and she had her full share of that ruthlessness a reformer must possess if the sweep to be made is to be a clean one. At the same time, she was a prudent woman, with no taste whatever for tilting at windmills, and she was fully alive to the fact that the forces arrayed against her were overwhelming.

Instead, therefore, of giving vent at once to her indignation against the degenerate sisters of her Order, she quietly withdrew from their

midst and betook herself to a little hut at Corbie, in Picardy, where for four years she lived as a hermit, with a view to preparing herself for the great work she was bent on accomplishing.

While Colette was at Corbie, her fame as a holy woman spread abroad, and people began to resort to her for advice. At length she announced to the bishop of the diocese that St. Francis had appeared to her in a vision, and had commissioned her to root out certain grave abuses that had sprung up in the convents of his Order, and to bring about in them a root and branch reformation.

The bishop wished her God's speed in her work and promised her all the help in his power: but the sisters themselves would have none of her reforms, and it soon came to a battle royal.

Colette, however, had the Church on her side, and St. Francis behind her, and she carried the day by dint of hard fighting. The control of the convents was placed in stronger and more worthy hands, and the nuns were made to understand that they must conduct themselves in a more seemly fashion than theretofore.

At the very time St. Colette was working night and day to bring about the reform of the convents, a great scandal had arisen in the Church itself, owing to the fact that there were three claimants in the field for the papal crown, viz., John XXIII., Benedict XIII., and Gregory XII.

Mindful of St. Paul's admonition as to what is seemly behaviour for women, Colette stood aloof from the dispute for a time, and left it to be settled by men. When she found, however, that the said men were by no means up to their work, that the Fathers at the Council of Constance were, in fact, doing nothing, she quietly took the matter into her own hands. She told them roundly what she thought of them; told them too what they ought to do; nay, what they must do; and they did it. A new election was held, with the result that Martin V. was chosen pope, and peace was restored.

Nor was this the only time the saint had to bring her sound common-sense to bear on bishops, cardinals, and even on the pope himself, to keep them in the ways of wisdom. The members of the Council of Basle appealed to her again and again for guidance, and when she found that their discussions were resulting in evil rather than in good, she solemnly exhorted them to cease their talk and go quietly back to their own homes. She died on March 6th, 1447.

St. Jane of Valois was a very different personage from St. Colette: she was more womanly, and, in spite of being the daughter of one king, the sister of another, and the wife of a third, she was much more humble-minded.

It would have been strange, indeed, if she had had a very exalted opinion of herself; for her whole life long she was called upon to submit to insults and endure humiliations. When her birth was announced to her father, King Louis XI., he hurled curses at her

because she was a girl, whereas he had wished for a boy; and when he was told that she was, and always would be, a cripple, he had serious thoughts of having her put quietly to death. As it was, he banished her from Court, and never was known to address to her a kindly word.

She passed her early days almost in solitude, with no single being to care for her; and while still quite a child, she developed a strong desire to become a nun. This was fortunate for, as it then seemed, there was nothing else for her to do.

But before the time came for her to take the veil, King Louis suddenly bethought himself that he might make use of her as a means of at once wreaking his vengeance on an enemy, and tying that enemy's hands. In spite, therefore, of her tears and entreaties, he married her to the Duke of Orleans.

The Duke, who bitterly resented having a crippled bride forced upon him, one whom he hated, too, because she was her father's daughter, treated her in the most insulting fashion, refusing even to speak to her. None the less, when he was condemned to death for taking part in a rebellion, Jane went at once to King Louis, and never rested until she had obtained her husband's pardon.

For years St. Jane strove with the most touching patience and gentleness to win the Duke's affection; but it was all in vain; and the first use he made of his power, when he ascended the throne, as King Louis XII., was to divorce her. Then at length she was able to gratify her life-long wish to become a nun. She founded the Order of the Annunciation; and having built a convent at Bruges, passed her last days there as its ancille, *i.e.*, handmaiden, for she refused to be called Superior.

She died in 1505. Her whole life was given up to deeds of charity, to trying to help others to bear their burdens, to making their lot brighter than her own had ever been. Yet, not only was she in life cut off from all happiness, but even after death she was not allowed to rest in peace. During an insurrection in 1562, her tomb was pillaged and her body was burnt.

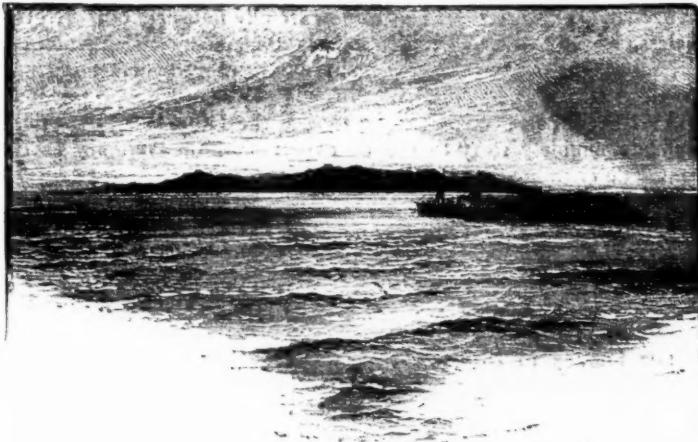
St. Clare of Rimini owes her canonisation to the sheer force of hard work, work among the very poorest and most degraded.

She lived in the fourteenth century, and was a lady of high degree, the possessor of lands and castles, and of great personal beauty. Her early days were passed in the midst of luxury and pleasure, and she is said to have loved the world keenly, and to have found great delight in tournaments and kindred shows.

She was twice married and both times most happily. She was one, in fact, whom all loved, with whom everything went well. Just when she was in the heyday of her content, however, she chanced to enter the church at Rimini one day, and while there it seemed to her as if the Virgin stood before her, and said to her, in a voice of

pitiful tenderness: "Clare, of what avail to your first husband, whom you loved so well, were his honours, his fortune, and his youth, since death has taken him from you and from them?"

From that moment Clare changed the whole current of her life; at one fell swoop she gave up all the pleasures she so loved, and threw herself heart and soul into works of charity. She devoted all her wealth to the service of the poor; and, that she might the better sympathise with them and help them, she went to live among them and shared their huts and their meals. There was neither bound nor limit to her self-sacrifice; her only thought was how to save others from suffering. Upon one occasion she offered to sell herself as a slave in order to raise the money wherewith to ransom a poor prisoner. At length, when she felt that her strength was failing her, she gathered around her a little community of holy women, workers among the poor, and passed her last days with them.



RAGATZ AND THE BATHS OF PFAFFERS.

BY CHARLES W. WOOD, F.R.G.S., AUTHOR OF "LETTERS FROM MAJORCA," "IN THE VALLEY OF THE RHONE," ETC., ETC.

WE left Basle early one morning for Ragatz. "You must reach St. Moritz by easy stages," said Dr. Diruf, anxious for E.'s welfare, in whose favour he held a special brief. "If you hurried from the low latitudes of Kissingen to the heights of the Engadine, you would probably find some difficulty in breathing when you arrived. I have known people who had to leave again immediately—or they would have died." Advice No. 1.

"You cannot do better than spend a few days at Ragatz," said Miss W. "There you are not far short of 2,000 feet above the sea ; the Quellenhof is first-rate, the baths are delicious" (but they were not the champagne baths Miss O'Grady delighted in), "and the scenery is magnificent." Advice No. 2.

We have said before that when Miss W. deigned to advise about Switzerland, her directions had to be carefully followed out. Nevertheless, we should never again stay at Ragatz on our way to the Engadine, simply to break the air, for it proved depressing and relaxing.

Though we had been so short a time at the Hôtel Euler the people seemed genuinely sorry to see us depart, and the voluminous old femme de chambre positively shed tears as E. passed down the staircase for the last time. We always felt it was base ingratitude not to go back to them on our second visit to Basle, and that for our disloyalty we deserved all the incivility and discomfort found at the Trois Rois. Yet it was to be regretted, for the situation of the Trois Rois, overlooking the swift green waters of the Rhine, was very charming.

The journey to Ragatz carried us through very lovely country. Before long we reached Säckingen, and looked out for the ghost of the Trompeter, but neither ghost nor trumpet nor echo of music appeared : nothing more exciting than the two towers of the old church, spoilt and modernised. Yet its traditions take us back to the sixth century and the early Benedictine nunnery founded by St. Fridolin the Irish monk, who in his ardour left his own country—where did the Irish monks not go to in those zealous days—settled in Rhineland, and made many converts to Christianity, dying about the year 540.

He converted the great Alpine valley of Glarus, which derived its name from that of St. Hilary of Poitiers, Fridolin's special protector,

and the great champion of Christianity in the fourth century. The valley belonged to the nunnery. Glarus has held faithful to its conversion, the greater number of its inhabitants—some 40,000—passing over to Protestantism at the Reformation and remaining true to the great cause to this day.

So the Trompeter settled himself on good and loyal ground when he came to Säckingen, and Scheffel could not have done better than immortalise him in his "golden legend."

The bones of St. Fridolin lie in the abbey church, or are supposed to do so, and his statue may be seen over the church portal with that of Count Orso of Glarus, whom he restored to life. But the nunnery was suppressed in 1801, after thirteen centuries of existence, and Säckingen and Glarus now belong to Baden.



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All about here the Rhine is very beautiful, and adds a great charm to the hills and valleys. The whole scenery of the Canton of Glarus is distinctly Alpine, and very wild, full of delightful excursions for good walkers. At Rheinfelden, the place was so picturesque that we longed to get out and explore, but with the fear of Miss W. before our eyes, resolutely kept our seats. One is nothing if not loyal.

Here we found one of the few covered wooden bridges left to Switzerland. The Rhine runs swiftly and is often white with rapids which with a noise of thunder and tremendous force empty themselves into the Höllenthaler. The covered bridge at one end rests on a rock rising out of the water around which it foams and swirls, and upon which once stood in the fifteenth century the castle of Stein, so strongly fortified in days gone by and so besieged. It suffered a good

deal in the Thirty Years' War, and here Duke Bernard fought a battle in which the Duc de Rohan lost his life.

The train went through the Frickthal and Valley of the Aar to picturesque old Brugg with its conical towers guarding the entrance. Here was born the strange, intellectual, but melancholy and sentimental Zimmermann, who attained to great fame in his day, but is now chiefly remembered as the author of a work on solitude, which no one reads.

Somewhere about here the three Alpine rivers meet and blend in the Aar, where Vindonissa once stood, the chief Roman settlement in Helvetia. It was sacked by the Vandals and destroyed by Childebert, but traces of an amphitheatre and aqueduct still remain. The Rhine Valley in this respect is very inferior to the Valley of the Rhone.

All this neighbourhood is historically interesting. Here stood the Castle of Halsburg, whence came Rudolph, founder of the Austrian dynasty which has reigned uninterruptedly from the thirteenth century. It was his son Albert who was openly murdered at Windisch, after crossing the Reusch in a small boat, by his nephew and three other conspirators: a fate Albert largely brought upon himself by his rapacious and overbearing disposition. Very little remains of the Castle; nothing but the fragments of a keep with time-defying walls eight feet thick, and a dungeon beneath, which can only be reached by a trapdoor, and may have been in those far-off days an *oubliette* in which many a poor wretch was sent to his doom.

The murderers of Albert escaped, but his widow and sons took vengeance upon the families, and 1,000 innocent people are said to have been sacrificed. Then the Empress Elizabeth retired to the nunnery of Poor Clares close by, founded by herself and Agnes Queen of Hungary. The latter spent here many years of her life, but never took the veil or became a cloistered nun.

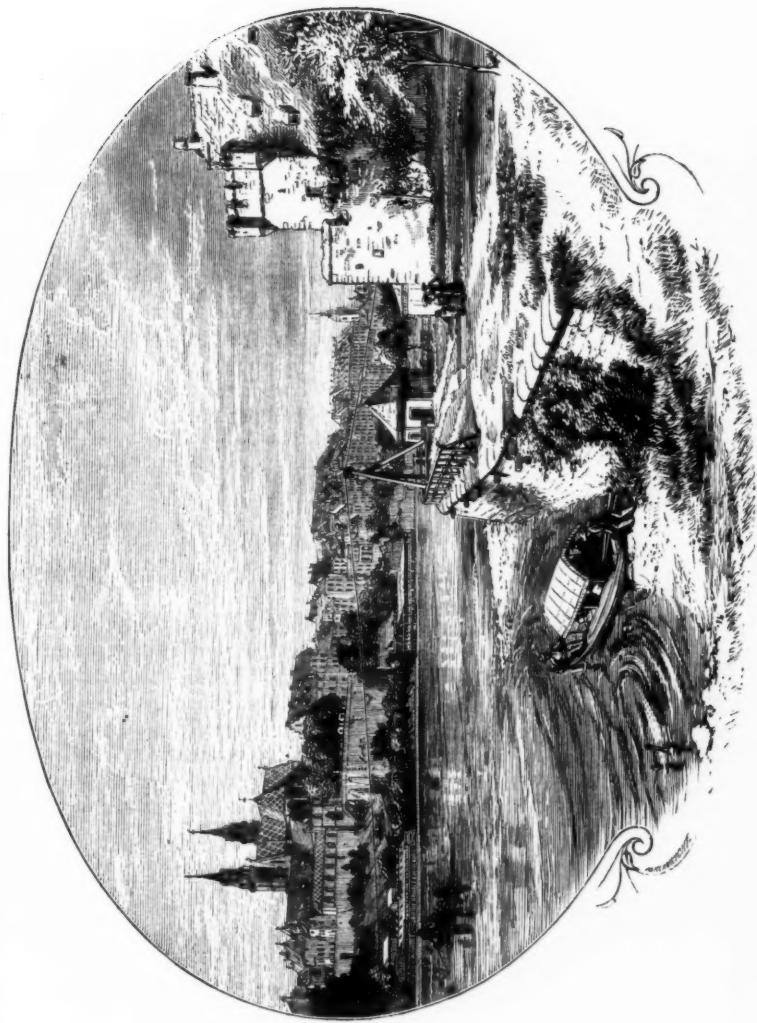
So the train went on through the hills and valleys and plains; fairly agricultural as we approach Zurich, but more given to pasture-land and cattle.

Zurich is very different now from what it was in the days of the Lake Dwellers or Celtic Helvetians. To-day great hotels overlook the lake, on which small white-winged boats amuse themselves, and small steamers go to and fro, and the modern element abounds. It is one of the dearest places in Switzerland, as we found when we stayed there in returning: and the Hôtel Baur seemed to proportion its prices to the size of its monstrous building.

Zurich has had a great past in its way, and figures much on the pages of the history of the Middle and earlier ages.

It was one of the chief centres of the Reformation, stirred into energy and action by the preaching of Zwingli, one of the greatest of men—a sort of second St. Paul, or at the least one of his truest imitators.

Zwingli was as healthy and optimistic in his views as Luther was



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too often the contrary : but Luther's childhood had been sad and repressed : Zwingli had been brought up in the atmosphere of home affection. He was peasant-born on his father's side, and throughout his life, too soon cut short, this kept him in touch with the people and gave him great influence over them. His temperament was naturally happy and joyous, his life admirable ; he was large-hearted ; his education was profound, his tastes classical, his theology sound. He had great independence of judgment, and time has borne out the correctness of all his views. Often opposed by Pope and bishops, his special pleading and eloquence invariably conquered ; his arguments were unanswerable. His life is one of the most wholesome and encouraging of works. His faith never failed him, nor his consistency, nor his courage.

Death came all too soon on the battlefield, at the post of duty. As field chaplain he had accompanied the Zurichers to Cappel, where they met their foes, the Forest Cantons. The Zurichers were defeated. Zwingli stood bravely amongst the fighters, encouraging them by his voice and energy. He was wounded, then knocked senseless. When fighting was over, and consciousness returned, a captain not recognising him asked if he wished for a priest. Zwingli, who, of all men, knew that no priest was necessary, shook his head, whereupon the captain inflicted a death wound. When his body was recognised, great was the excitement and consternation, and one may hope that he who inflicted the death wound ever afterwards led a life of repentance.

It is recorded that the expression of his face in death was as full of earnestness, energy and courage as it had been in life. He was certainly one of the finest characters the world has seen.

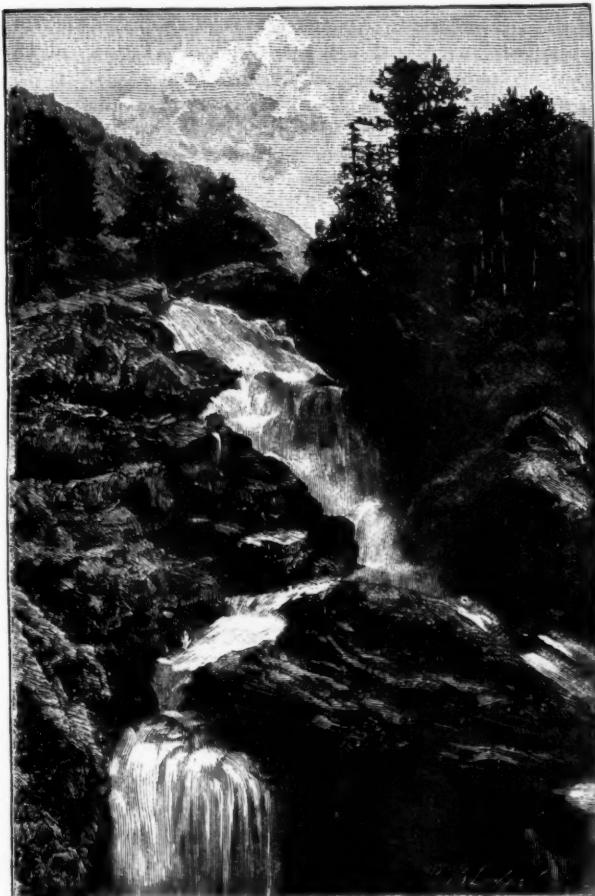
Zurich has been famous for other great men, including the gentle Lavater, the friend of Goethe, and himself in his day a great preacher and theological writer : though nothing survives excepting his work on *Physiognomy*. He was very much of a mystic, yet earnest in doing good, and finally met something of a martyr's death.

It happened in the year 1799—just a century ago—when Zurich was taken by the French, and Lavater, in the goodness of his heart, had offered a grenadier wine and money. On turning away and stooping to minister to a wounded soldier lying very near his door, the ungrateful grenadier shot him in the back. Lavater lingered for two years in great agony, then died.

The Limmat runs through Zurich issuing from the lake. It is a large and curiously-constructed town, but beautifully situated, with new and handsome suburbs : palatial houses springing up around for the occupation of its merchants and manufacturers.

But to-day we must not linger in Zurich, though the few hours we spent there on that first occasion will be long remembered. The overpowering heat, the brilliancy of the skies, the blue of the flashing lake, the white-winged boats lazily moving about in the gentlest of

breezes, and the shelter of the Baur Hotel garden overlooking the lake, under which we took coffee—it was all an earthly paradise. But we had only just time to discover this and wish to return to it, little dreaming that when we did so, the crowds of tourists and



BERNINA FALL.

pleasure-seekers would destroy its charm, and make the hotel itself odious.

The train took its way by the shores of the lake, until, at Laachen, we parted from the blue waters, and for a time went steaming through marshy plains, where storks standing upon one leg

complacently surveyed their fine images, and were so accustomed to the rush of the steam engine, that they did not turn a feather at this intrusion upon their solitude. Then came Weesen, and the waters of Lake Wallenstadt.

There is an old Dominican nunnery here, dating from the thirteenth century. After the famous Battle of Sempach, which routed the Austrians, the Confederates took Weesen, but the Austrians managed by treachery to get into the town, and put the whole of the Swiss garrison to death. This led to the Battle of Näfels and the final defeat of the Austrians. Above Weesen are the remains of a fort, which conceals a cavern called the Ghosts' Chamber: whether the ghosts of treacherous Austrians or murdered Swiss, or a combination of shadowy forces, is not recorded.

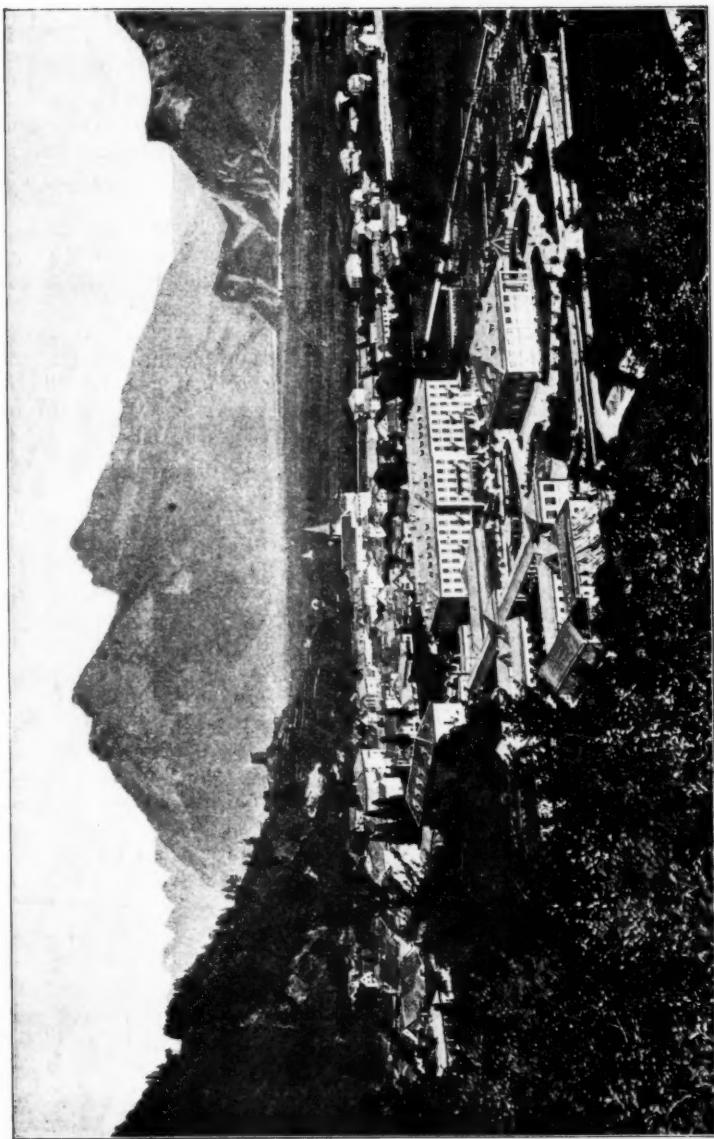
The scenery, as the train skirts Lake Wallenstadt, is magnificent, and the train passes onwards too rapidly. On the north side the lime and sandstone cliffs rise so precipitously that no road has ever been made there. A few cottages may be seen almost overhanging the waters only to be reached by footpaths. Some of these cliffs rise 3,000 feet high, and upon their summits are Swiss villages and Swiss pastures that in summer are crowded with cattle. It is worth while stopping at Weesen for the sake of visiting these villages, once accessible only by narrow rugged paths, but now replaced by a new and safer roadway. Many of these walks and climbs yield all the pleasure and none of the risks of Alpine climbing.

On the south side of the lake, the hills are less precipitous, and above them one catches sight of higher Alpine mountains with their sharp and rugged peaks. At the north-east end are the peaks of the Sieben Churfürsten, the highest rising nearly 8,000 feet; seven peaks, forming a very picturesque group. The whole neighbourhood of this little lake is full of charm, and the chamois may often be seen on the hill-tops.

Then comes the Valley of the Seez, with the old iron mines in the Gonzen, whose hematite ore was wont to turn everything red, so that men and animals looked as though they belonged to another race of beings.

At the foot of the Gonzen lies the picturesque old town of Sargans, surrounded by its chains of mountains: but the famous old castle perched on its eminence has been very much restored. It may be called a valley of waters, for it is the watershed dividing the streams that fall into the Rhine from those which fall into Lake Wallenstadt. It is even possible that the Rhine may one day change its course, and deserting Lake Constance pass through Wallenstadt and Zurich. A rise of 20 feet in the waters, it is said, would bring about the change, which was only prevented from taking place in 1618 by the construction of dams. It is even supposed that this, in remote ages, was the actual course of the Rhine.

Another six miles and we reached Ragatz. The declining sun was



RAGATZ, SHOWING THE QUELENHOF.

casting long shadows as we passed up the long straight road bordered by pine trees, leading to the village which is growing into quite a small town. We were alone in the omnibus, and it was pleasant to feel that the great rush to Ragatz would not begin for another ten days.

From the first moment we thought the place very picturesque, though hot and relaxing. There is quite an air of fashion about it, with fashionable prices. The shops of lace and ivory and jewellery treat every visitor as though he were a prince in disguise: and the visitor with a sense of *noblesse oblige* thrust upon him, feels it would be beneath his dignity to bargain. Unfortunately, in these days of American and South African millionaires, money is accounted of no value. In the days of Solomon this applied only to silver, now it may be said of gold.

At the Quellenhof everything was well organised. It is an enormous building with the baths attached to it, and large grounds containing "dependencies," an orchestra, reading-room, and all else this luxurious age demands. If the charges were extravagant, at least one received a certain equivalent in comfort and civility: a state of things now so rarely met with that it predisposed one in favour of Ragatz, and was a great inducement to prolong one's stay. In places, indeed, where long sojourns are necessary or habitual, one may still meet with a good deal of this courtesy; but where travellers stay a night, or it may be two nights, and then go on their way—such as the *Trois Rois* at Basle—it has disappeared. Fortunately few managers are so blind to their own interest as to imitate the host of the *Kissingen Hôtel de Russie*, where the following conversation took place not many weeks ago, between Miss W., gentlest of ladies, and the landlord:

Miss W.: "When we leave, our friends the Miss Z.'s would be very glad of our rooms."

Host—sharply: "Quite impossible. The rooms are already let."

Miss W.: "But I cannot quite understand, for I have only just given notice of our departure."

Host—very decidedly: "All the same, the rooms are let."

Miss W.: "I am sorry, for the Miss Z.'s cannot remain in their present rooms: they are too small for them."

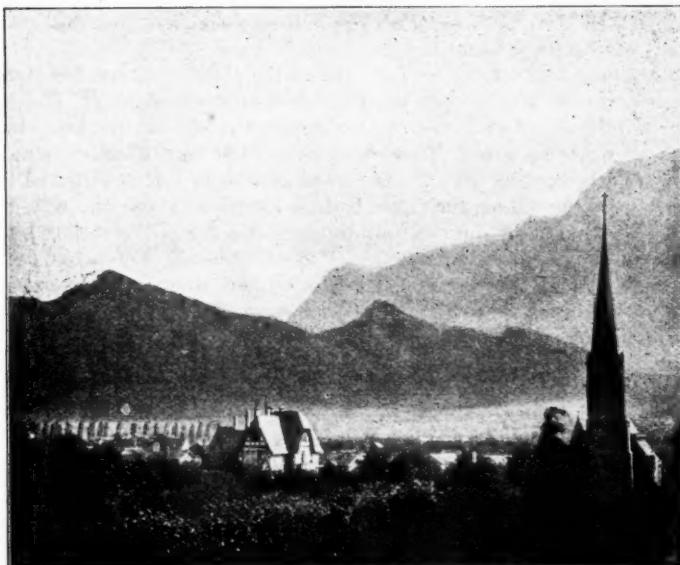
Host—rudely and brusquely: "That is nothing to me. I can let the rooms ten times over and at higher prices than they are paying me."

Tone and manner left everything to be desired. Happily this is the exception, not the rule. Most of the people who were at the *Hôtel de Russie* last year, this year went elsewhere. It is only fair to add that in other ways the hotel had improved: the objectionable head waiter had left, and a new and better chef reigned in the kitchen.

There was no fault to be found with the Quellenhof. The situation

of the hotel was perfect from a picturesque point of view, but very much in a basin. One felt crushed in by the surrounding hills, and though it might be nearly 2,000 feet high, it was anything but bracing. The climate is very mild, and, in summer, extremely hot. But the baths are supposed to be infallible in cases of rheumatism and other ailments, and in the words once said to us by a visitor: "No matter how tired and done up you may be after a long day's travelling, a delicious sense of rest and repose takes possession of you as soon as you step into the water, and you leave it feeling like a giant refreshed."

There is a very distinctive air about Ragatz. Facing it is the



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broad avenue leading to the small town, where the narrow streets are not inviting, and have nothing quaint about them. But standing on the bridge over the Tamina, the view is very fine. The torrent rushes down with swift force, between its banks lined with mills and forges; hurries and froths and tumbles on its way to the Rhine.

A delightful walk or drive, is to follow the upward course of this stream to the Old Baths of Pfaffers, a distance of some three miles, through a rugged, rock-bound, narrowing gorge, full of the wildest beauty. Between the two walls of rock, often high and perpendicular, there is just room for the road and torrent. The latter rushes and foams with angry roar some distance below the road; it froths over

great boulders, and swirls round sharp corners, takes constant leaps to yet deeper depths, so becoming a series of waterfalls. Ferns grow in quiet nooks, and the precipitous banks are often covered with them. Few spots in Switzerland equal this drive, and you seem to reach the confines of the world on arriving at the ancient establishment that existed long before the now fashionable Ragatz was even dreamed of.

We found here a very singular building which looked as though it might once have been an enormous convent given up to an army of monks. Even the chapel was not wanting. There were long vaulted stone passages that seemed built for no other purpose than meditation and penance, and from these passages great rooms opened that might well have been monkish refectories in the days gone by. The cells we imagined beneath.

A convent did exist as far back as the eighth century, but it was a mile away, and higher up the gorge in the village of Pfaffers, splendidly placed on a mountain plateau—the old monks knew how to choose their sites. They must have been true lovers of nature, and of a better sort than the monks of later days. It overlooked the Valley of the Rhine, the great Falknis towering on the one side, the valley on the other side opening out towards the Wallensee and the picturesque Sieben Churfürsten. The old convent was burnt down and rebuilt in the seventeenth century, and went on its way until 1838, when it was suppressed, after having existed more than 1,000 years. But it was not an arbitrary suppression. The convent had fallen upon evil days. Neither Peter's pence nor any other pence came their way; they fell into debt, and the Brethren begged to be released from their burden. The Abbot and monks were pensioned off, and the Government turned the convent into a lunatic asylum: a two-fold desecration, for the harmless imbecile can neither enjoy the splendours of the situation, nor join in the worship of the old chapel.

It was not the fault of the Abbot that evil days fell upon them. They were once wealthy and flourishing, and to their large territories, they from the twelfth century added the dignity of Princes of the Holy Roman Empire. The title sounds imposing; but people who assist at a Barmecide feast depart hungry: and when the French confiscated their revenues with the fine disregard to the laws of meum and tuum that distinguishes the Rob Roys of this world, the Abbot and Brethren found that high sounding titles and empty dishes had much in common—both were unsatisfying.

The old baths, however, buried lower down in the gorge, still flourish in their way. They were first discovered in the eleventh century, of course by a hunter. In 1080 the Emperor Henry III., who in his resolute bearing and deep religious convictions endeavoured to reform Church and State and control the power of the Pope, conferred all rights over the mineral springs to the Abbots: probably not a very extensive gift in those early days, nor for many a long year

after. They were out of the world and difficult of access. The source was at the bottom of a great abyss of rock and darkness, and those who wished to profit by the healing waters were let down by ropes from the cliffs and dipped in the water. There they would remain night and day for a week at a time, eating and drinking and sleeping in the hot water. It required courage and faith to undertake such a cure, and probably many found themselves all the better for it.

In 1382 a Kurhaus was built, and was so successful that it was rebuilt on a larger scale in 1420. The present establishment—of so singular a design that in the matter of inns it is neither fish, flesh,



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fowl, nor good red herring—was built in 1704, and so is nearly 200 years old.

Before this, in 1543, a wooden platform had been built all along the rocky walls leading to the source of the spring. It must look now very much as it looked then, for the platform still exists.

On first arriving we thought it the funniest place we had seen for many a long day. All down the road, for a short distance from the inn, were benches on which sat a curious array of people; humble folk who frequent the baths of Pfaffers, for to-day their richer brethren pay their devotions to the more luxurious Ragatz. No wonder. Nothing more gloomy than Pfaffers can be conceived, and

if it cures rheumatism and other ills on the one hand, must surely produce melancholia on the other.

But the country people taking the air on the benches, with their peasant faces and curious costumes, looked anything but unhappy. Some wore gout shoes, others were wrapped in shawls, others again seemed to have rolled blankets about their heads: each according to his or her necessities. They come from all parts of the country, and for a very small sum go through the water cure. It is no longer necessary to suspend them with ropes, and they pass their days very comfortably. As far as we saw, all had long passed the age of levity and exuberance of spirits, and sitting on a bench in the sunshine, or strolling up and down the road within well-defined limits, was sufficient recreation between the intervals of bathing: their one excitement was to watch the crowd of visitors that, walking or driving, came in a never-ending procession from Ragatz.

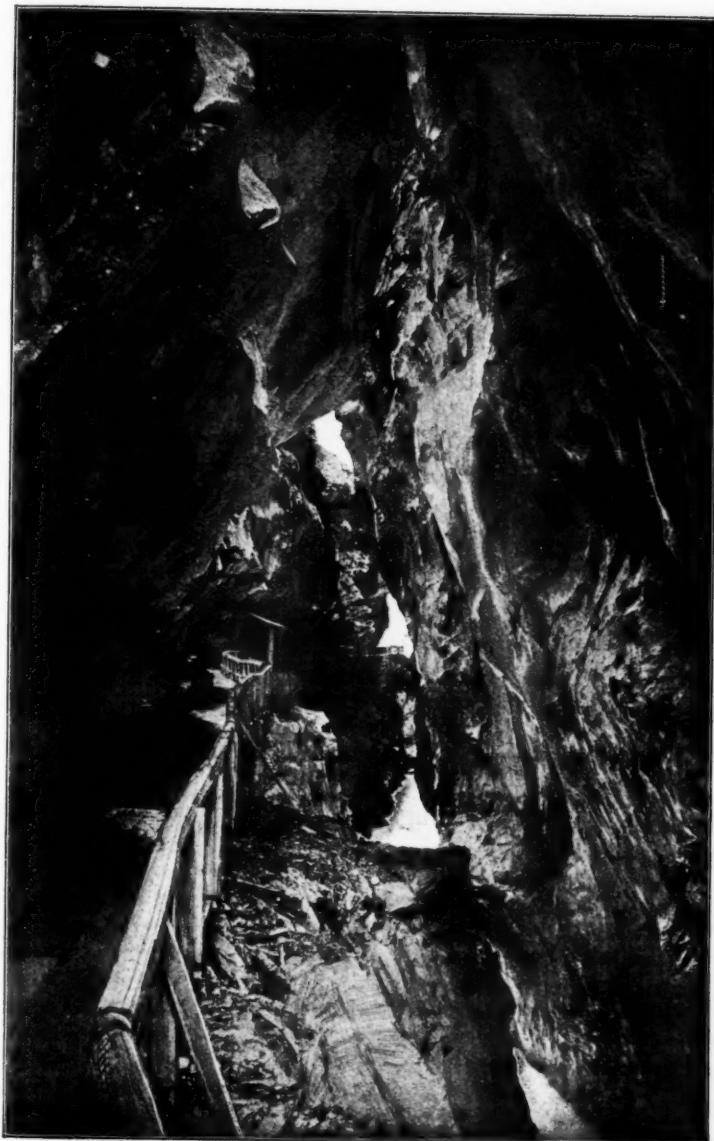
We went through the vaulted corridors, and down a flight of steps came to a large room where a boy was in charge of an army of cotton umbrellas that, like Joseph's coat, were of many colours. He insisted upon our taking one each, and as he evidently intended to have his way, we gave in for the sake of peace. As the sun was shining in a perfectly unclouded sky, we concluded that other showers than those from the sky had to be braved.

Leaving the room for the open air, a great mass of rock confronted us, cleft in twain, as it were, by some tremendous convulsion of nature. Or a great storm might have passed that way and the lightning rent it asunder, and left its zigzag marks behind for ever.

As we took our walk down the wooden platform, we seemed entering the portals of the infernal regions: before us was blackness of darkness; high over our heads rude and rocky walls narrowing to a fine point, through which one caught sight of a long thin zigzag streak of blue sky. Beneath our feet the water rushed on its narrow way, with a perpetual roar; and occasionally water dropped from the cliffs in showers, bringing the many-coloured umbrellas into requisition. This platform extended for about 700 yards through the cavern—if we may so call it. Here and there the rocks below met and concealed the water, almost subterranean for some hundreds of yards, then bursting forth with fresh force and fury.

At the end we came to the cavern in which the hot spring rises at a temperature of 100° Fahrenheit. The water falls into a reservoir 15 feet deep, and is conducted to the baths through pipes. The first baths were fastened to the rock like birds' nests, and it was here that the primitive bathers were let down by ropes, and spent their weeks eating, drinking, sleeping and bathing in the waters in semi-darkness. The marks of those old bird's-nest baths still exist. As a rule the springs do not flow in winter, but return with the melting of the snows.

It was pleasant to return to the free air and open skies. The boy



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took back our red umbrellas, and then manifested an advanced commercial instinct by charging the full value of the umbrellas for their very temporary use. We mildly protested, and gave him what we considered a fair return, with a benevolent intimation that he would get no more. Upon which he danced an agonising hornpipe, declaring the while that he would have the law of us, and on finally looking round half-way up the staircase, was executing a series of frantic somersaults.

Once more in the vaulted corridors, we went into one of the large refectories, where a couple of hundred people could have dined with ease. The room was empty, with the exception of a German lady indulging in the light refreshment of beer and German sausage, but as she sat at another table we were not made envious by these dainties. Very obliging damsels brought us excellent tea, delicious bread and butter, and a choice of preserves, for which the charge was so moderate that the jam had evidently been a delicate and gratuitous attention. In a room beyond there was a great crowd of people and dogs, and the atmosphere social and physical seemed heated. It was the kitchen of the establishment: a sort of Pandemonium in the wrong place—it should have been at the end of the long dark cavern we had just left.

One may ascend the valley to the surrounding pastures and thick woods, and looking down the gorge realise the extraordinary situation of the bathing-house. It is all very wild, and the view of the limestone cliffs, the crags and peaks of the Calandberg and the Falknis, the brilliant green of the pastures and the sombre depths of the woods, form a magnificent combination of scenery. The Calandberg can be ascended in five hours, and amongst the minor Alpine climbs is interesting.

The walk back to Ragatz in the cool of the afternoon, when the shadows were lengthening, was delightful; and it was pleasant to get back to the civilisation of the Quellenhof after the depression of Pfaffers, with its gloomy corridors and sad groups of invalids who were too much in evidence.

The next morning the finiculaire took us to a small village on the heights, and the ruined fourteenth century Castle of Wartenstein. Wild flowers and ferns and wild strawberries grew everywhere, and from this height we were able to appreciate the splendid scenery surrounding Ragatz. From the ruined castle one looked down upon the great plain, the town at our feet, the Quellenhof with its large garden laid out in straight paths and sections, conspicuous.

Through the plain the Rhine took its winding way, a broad stream, full of placid repose and almost level with the land. The magnificent mountains towered around, their peaks and undulations sharply outlined against the blue sky: a sky in which the sun shone like another molten fiery furnace. We had the ruin to ourselves, with the exception of a little German woman, who flitted about picking the

wild flowers and strawberries, and was good enough to inform us that she was out for a month's holiday to recruit after an illness.

"I left my man and my children at home," said she, with that necessity to unburden her mind such people possess: "for the mother cannot do her duty by her home if the strength is wanting. Life is difficult at the best of times; we need our energies to keep going."

She was a pretty, rather refined little woman, spoke in a quiet, shy voice, and moved about noiselessly as a shadow.

"Where do you come from?" asked E.

"From Säckingen," she replied.



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"From Säckingen! That is where the Trompeter came from—the Trompeter von Säckingen. Do you know anything about him?"

"The Trompeter von Säckingen," repeated the woman. "I never heard even his name. At least he does not live there now."

"Oh, no," laughing. "He lived 300 years ago; but all the same you ought to know about him; everyone ought to know about him. You may see his image in the shop windows, carved in ivory."

"I never heard of him," returned the woman. "Säckingen is my man's native place and home, and we know everyone, at least by name. He is well to do and much respected. It is a long way off,

but my own father and mother live here, and I stay with them. So I have my holiday free of cost. But I count the days until I get back again to my husband and children. Every day I come up here and breathe the fresh air all the morning. In Ragatz one seems to suffocate."

Presently she flitted away, just like a shadow, and reappeared standing on the brow of the hill above us, her silhouette sharply outlined against the sky, the breeze gently playing with her garments.

"Sehr schöne, schöne aussicht," she called out, clasping her hands in the sentimental way of the Germans, then spreading them before her, but we had almost to guess the words, for she was quite a long way off, and her voice was gentle. We wondered whether it was naturally so, or only the weakness of illness. A gentle German voice is as rare as the dodo.

We wandered up the hot white road, through the village, where the small gardens were full of flowers, and swarms of large bees were gathering honey, and where we overlooked another valley, with more lofty mountains. The place seemed given up to solitude and repose; but higher up, beyond the little church, the people were working in the fields with red and blue cotton handkerchiefs tied about their heads, as though to rival the poppies and cornflowers that are so abundant wherever corn grows in this part of the world. If we had kept on our way, we might have reached the village of Pfaffers, and looked down the gorge upon the bath-house with its motley groups of invalids, and the Tamina rushing on its way to the Rhine. But the sun was fiery and forbidding, and we quietly went back to Ragatz through the cool and quiet woods.

As yet we were the only English at the Quellenhof, and as usual the German element was loud-voiced and aggressive, with a few pleasant exceptions. Some of the visitors were strange studies of character, appearing in extraordinary costumes, and looking as though they had come to Ragatz to be cured of mental disease rather than of bodily ailment. During our very short stay there was no time to become acquainted with them and find out their peculiarities. We were, indeed, only too glad to hasten the day of our departure. Ragatz was more trying and relaxing than Kissingen, and we longed for the much praised—much overpraised as we found—virtues of St. Moritz and the Engadine.

The journey towards Thusis was remarkable; few parts of the Rhine valley are finer, though the river spreads its waters over its shallow bed and loses much of its beauty. The Falknis is conspicuous, a towering gigantic mass; mountain torrents rush down the hills. Then came Chur or Coire where we changed trains: an old town dating back to the days of the Romans.

There was a bishopric here in the fifth century, when the bishops were powerful in the land. The town still has its ancient walls and Romonsch language, the latter going back to the middle ages and

having its origin in an early form of Lombard dialect, with a mixture of the primitive Latin spoken in many parts of Europe. It is now a blending of German and words of Celtic origin, relating to Alpine life and work, as unintelligible to an outsider as the Provençal of the South of France, another offshoot of the old Romonsch. That of the Grisons has two leading dialects, one of which is found in the Engadine, the other in the Oberland.

Much effort is made to retain this fast-expiring dialect. Romonsch newspapers are published in Samaden, Schulz, and Disentis; but the inhabitants of the Grisons all speak Italian or German, and these



THE TAMINA.

modern languages are more and more heard, and the historically interesting Romonsch, like the ancient outlines of the towns, is retiring more and more into the background. The world does not stand still.

The history of the Grisons reaches back to very remote times. Its climate and vegetation are severe; it is the land of glaciers, mountain torrents and running streams. The original inhabitants are supposed to have been an Etruscan race who had emigrated and settled here some 500 years B.C. Then came the Roman reign until about 500 A.D., when Theodoric the Great established some Alemanni in the country. So it went on with changes and quarrels including the quarrels of the two great factions of the Planta and De Salis families, only ended by the wars of Napoleon.

The French, as usual, committed endless barbarities, destroying the famous Benedictine Convent of Disentis, and with it the great chronicle dating from the seventh century, and the whole splendid library with its collection of MSS. and translations. The abbey is said to have been founded by Sigisbert the Irish monk and disciple of St. Columban, and its influence gradually civilized the surrounding country. It is curious how many Irish monks seem to have gone abroad in those early ages to spread Christianity: how long before England Ireland was civilized, and how, ever since England has been civilized, Ireland has become uncivilized.

The abbey still exists at Disentis, and gives shelter to a few monks, who have turned it into a school. It towers above the village and looks imposing, but all its glory, wealth and influence, have departed. The old abbots were Princes of the Holy Roman Empire and did just as they pleased. Amongst the MSS. that were burnt in 1799 by the French were those of Placidus a Spescha, who first explored the Alps systematically.

But this is rather wandering out of our route, for we did not pass Disentis on our way to Thusis, though we did pass Reichenau, where in 1793 Louis Philippe lived eight months as usher in a school. He arrived with the proverbial stick and bundle, and no one but Monsieur Jost the head-master knew who he was: and he kept the secret. The school was in the château now belonging to the Plantas, and must have been a very pleasant residence to the refugee, who was then Duc de Chartres: possibly eight of the happiest months of his varied life.

The Rheinthal is very interesting here, with its numerous old castles, and its junction of the Vorder and Hinter Rhein, the waters of the one black, of the other grey. There is a covered wooden bridge over the grey waters of the Vorder, leading to Disentis.

Our road followed the Hinter Rhein, with its hills, old castles, and singular people, who possess a strange intermixture of language and religion throughout this valley of the *Domleschg*, and when the train drew up at Thusis, we were to have nothing more to do with the railroad for many a long day: by no means a matter of regret.

Thusis consists of one long and very ugly street, with modern houses, the ancient and more picturesque Thusis having been burnt half a century ago. Few towns, however, can boast a finer situation, lying as it does at the foot of the *Via Mala*, and surrounded by wonderful walks and excursions.

From the back of the hotel this unexpected view was a sort of revelation, passing at once from the commonplace elements of village houses—Thusis is hardly more than a village—to a scene that might be a thousand miles from any habitation.

Below the garden lies a deep ravine or hollow of the wildest description, and the mountains slope away in gigantic rocky masses, whilst across the valley lies the opening to the famous *Via Mala*.

The inn is a curious and rambling structure, built on a slope, so that you go down from one level to another by means of quaint passages and out-of-the-way staircases. The lowest depth is very much in a hollow: one feels the broiling sun and the want of air, and a desire arises to climb to that ruined castle of Hohen Rhätien, lying so romantically on a height, and guarding as it were the entrance to the famous *Via Mala*: or to reach still higher to one of the rocky peaks and breathe the glorious oxygen. These lower



IN THE JULIER PASS.

rooms are unendurable, but if you do not telegraph before your arrival, the chances are that you will have to put up with them. For since the coming of the railway, Thusis is a rallying point for the Engadine, and people break their journey here, spending a few days exploring the wonderful neighbourhood, or arriving just in time to take one of the many diligences leaving daily for St. Moritz and Pontresina.

If you take your own carriage you may choose the Julier Pass or

the Albula, but neither one nor the other takes you through the Via Mala. This carries you over the Splügen, and you enter the Engadine from the Italian side; a much longer, but more beautiful and varied journey, and perhaps rather to be chosen in returning.

Few defiles in Switzerland equal the Via Mala in savage grandeur. Its frowning walls rise to a height of 1,600 feet, and are almost appalling in their solidity. Here and there they meet to within ten yards of each other, making the bottom of the precipice, where the water flows, almost dark and impenetrable.

At the entrance, 400 feet above the valley, lies the ruined castle of Hohen Rhätien, separating the Albula from the Rhine, still more picturesque and romantic as you look backwards on your way up the defile, than from the garden of the hotel. The ruins are said to owe their origin to Rhætus, Chief of the Etruscans, who was driven out of Italy by the Gauls, and settled here some 300 years B.C. He it was who brought with him the race and language of Etruria.

Near the ruined castle one observes the remains of an old chapel dedicated to St. John, the earliest Christian temple in the valley.

In the early ages the Via Mala was inaccessible, but in 1822 Pocobelli, the Italian architect, constructed the present road, a triumph of engineering. Three bridges have been thrown over the defile, and the finest part of the scenery ends at the second bridge. No one, seeing the Rhine making its way through this narrow chasm could imagine it presently becoming the broad river that is the glory and boast of Switzerland and Germany, on its way to the North Sea. The inhabitants round about are Protestant and speak the Romonsch language.

As a resting-place we thought Thusis superior to Ragatz, and almost regretted the days spent in that enervating watering-place, whose one excursion is to the old baths of Pfaffers. Our experience has recently been corroborated by a friend ordered there by his German physicians, a friend well acquainted with the country, whose father's name frequently appears in the life of Bismarck, and who at one period was his political associate. "I came here very unwillingly," he lately wrote to us, "and was to remain a whole month. At the end of twenty-four hours I found the place so hot and relaxing, so dull and heavy, that I packed up and took flight for St. Moritz. Picture me in the very room in which you saw me last year; but alas! when I look across to a certain balcony it is empty; I no longer see you making signs that you are ready for our afternoon excursion: and I feel sad. Yet am I thankful to be delivered from Ragatz."

This was echoing our own exact impression, and we felt that our time would almost have been better spent in Thusis.

It was quite a small excitement to see the diligences making ready to start for their various destinations; to watch the packing and settling of the passengers inside and out and see them dash off with

their four horses, followed by heavy wagons piled up with luggage. Then after the storm would come the calm ; after the clatter and confusion, the shouting of German voices and gesticulating of German arms, hands and heads—there were a hundred German travellers just now to one Englishman—Thusis would sink back into the quiet of its ways, whilst we watched the string of diligences rumbling over the bridge that crosses the Nolla, and winding round the long road by the base of the Via Mala, pass out of sight in a cloud of dust and a



SILVAPLANA.

waving of handkerchiefs on their way to the Albula or the Julier Pass.

Our hired carriage was ready the next morning, at such an hour as placed a respectful distance between us and the string of diligences, their dust, noise and confusion. By this arrangement we had the road to ourselves from first to last, which added no little to our comfort and pleasure.

The portier at the Quellenhof had rather stolen a march upon us in this matter. He was one of the best and most civil portiers in the

world, with all necessary information at his finger-ends ; but with a keen eye to business he telephoned on his own responsibility to Thusis, arranging for a carriage to meet us at the station, which was quite unnecessary, and be ready to take us on the next day. That short drive to the hotel ruined his plans, for we found the carriage so uncomfortable that we declined to have anything more to do with it, chose our own conveyance from a man recommended by the landlord, and left the deposed coachman to fight his own battles with the portier of the Quellenhof.

It was a hot and cloudless day, but we were highly favoured. There had been heavy rain in the night, and though the roads were white and dry, the dust was laid. The next day it would begin again. We chose, or rather our driver chose for us, the Julier Pass in preference to the Albula. The latter is the less direct, but somewhat finer, offering more variety of scenery. The first portion of our way through the Schien Pass was extremely grand. It has not all the wildness of the Via Mala, but is more open : the road is not built under the frowning cliffs, but lies half-way up them, giving a greater depth of precipice. Through this ravine rushes the Albula on its way to the Rhine, which it joins at Thusis.

It was a long ascent until just before reaching Tiefenkasten, when a sharp, steep dip led into the picturesque hollow in which lies the village, all burnt down in 1890, and therefore looking very brand-new to-day. Here the roads divide, the right going over the Julier Pass, the left over the Albula. The language spoken in Tiefenkasten is a mixture of many dialects.

After only a few minutes' halt, we began again a sharp ascent by the side of a wooded ravine wild and precipitous, opening finally into the Valley of the Stein, a series of ancient basins and gorges, with a few scattered villages and ruined castles. Through this we went on to Tinzen, where the Val d'Err leads to the range of hills separating the Albula from the Julier. A good walker or mountain climber will here find many excursions possible.

Still climbing upwards to Roffna, we passed through a remarkable defile to Molins, where we arrived just in time to see a string of diligences pack up its human freight and go off one after another : and halting here two hours for the sake of the horses, we saw them no more.

It was a small place with no special attraction beyond its magnificent situation in an amphitheatre of hills amongst which the peaks of the Piz d'Err rise to 11,000 feet. Here we lunched and found everything well served in a long light room which had evidently been recently added to the main building to meet the necessities of the ever increasing crowd of travellers : the crowd which the diligences had obligingly carried off for our especial benefit.

Amongst the few people in the room was a lady seated at a small table, comfortably enjoying a large bottle of champagne. She was

dressed in white from head to foot, a somewhat trying travelling costume, and accompanying the champagne were several substantial dishes. Her proportions were gigantic, and presently when she left in a hired carriage, she entirely filled it. Her voice was masculine and her face, probably owing to Pommery, which she drained to the dregs, was very red. The whole, however, was redeemed by an expression of extreme good nature, and she was evidently popular with the hotel-people.

"She passes through every year," said the landlord, "is always dressed exactly in the same way, and orders precisely the same déjeuner. A large order for a solitary lady," he added smiling, "but though an enormous woman, she stops at what she is—grows neither larger nor smaller. For ten years she has done this. She has a villa near St. Moritz, and is now on her way to Ragatz, where she takes the baths. In winter she lives in Vienna, where I am told she keeps open house and makes *la pluie et le beau temps*."

"Then she is Austrian?"

"No, she is French; but she married an Austrian and has adopted his country. Sometimes she is alone, sometimes accompanied by a *dame de compagnie*: a grotesque little Austrian lady who is as small as la baronne is immense. But she makes up for it in liveliness and chatter, and during the halt here keeps all my people on the qui vive, running for this, that and the other. Ah, monsieur, we landlords see strange customers in our time—a fine study is that of the innkeeper if he has any brains at all, and any sense of humour, and keeps his eyes open. Not that our experience is all comedy. Many a sad and seamy tale could I relate to you that would wring tears from your heart as they have from mine. You are going for some weeks to the Engadine. Well, monsieur, I lived there for several years, and for the life of me cannot make out where lies the attraction. But the drive from here to St. Moritz is fine, though a little monotonous. Ah! here comes your carriage. A decent driver that, about the best on the road. Some of them suffer too much from constant thirst."

It was fortunate that the carriage did appear, or our host would have gone on for ever. A great deal of our subsequent drive lay through bare and barren scenery, but scenery that was always striking. Now we passed over rocky plains, where nothing had ever sprouted, and now through green and smiling undulations, where ferns and wild flowers grew abundantly. Every now and then our driver, leaving his horses would dart into a field and return with a handful of flowers and grasses which he presented with the proper grace and bow. Wild roses, large and beautiful and exquisitely tinted grew in many parts, and before the end of the drive the carriage looked ready for a Niceday and a Battle of Flowers.

Occasionally we passed a ruined castle by way of variety, but the long journey was lonely and desolate. Bivio, one of the rare villages, looked very poverty-stricken—as it is. Shut in by high mountains,

it sees little sunshine. It is high up—nearly 6,000 feet—and the cold is piercing, and trees and flowers and the fruits of the earth refuse to grow there.

It was a long slow climb to the top of the Pass, and took quite another two hours from the time we left Bivio. At the very end of the ascent we passed two pillars called Julius' columns, supposed by some to be the remains of a Celtic temple dedicated to the sun: by others to be milestones on the military road made by Augustus over the Maloja and Julier. Very soon we began to descend, and before long, far down, the Valley of the Inn lay spread before us, in all its splendour. Great mountains surrounded us; small lakes reposed in the valley; loveliest of all the lake of Silvaplana, reflecting the pines that surround it. Down, down, until we entered the long dusty road leading to St. Moritz, and found ourselves on a level with the lakes and the villages.

To our right lay the little village of Sils Maria, the prettiest village in the Engadine, and above it rose the snow peaks of the great Bernina range.

It was evening, the sun was setting, and twilight was at hand. In the distance, three miles away, we could see St. Moritz rising in the midst of the plain. In that very first glimpse a presentiment came over us that we should not like it, should never feel at home there, should leave it with no regret. This was fulfilled to the letter, but we will not anticipate. We are aware of being in the minority, but that minority does exist and is very decided in its opinion. Our horses clattered over the road as briskly as if they had not been travelling for nearly twelve hours. Silvaplana, lying in the meadows between the lakes, was passed, its pine-woods putting on a deeper tone. Then came Campfer, which many people prefer to St. Moritz, as being smaller and quieter and less fashionable. Then the valley widened, we rumbled over the bridge and crossed the river, and, stretching across the plain, saw the long, low buildings of the Kurhaus with its baths and gardens. A few moments more, and our drive was ended.



THE LADY-KILLER.

By HYLDA M. ROBINS.

I.

"WHO is the new man coming to-day?" asked Jack Kennedy with a yawn, as he threw first his tennis racquet, and then himself down on the smooth grass under the ilex. "I heard Lady Carsfield say she expected some one."

"Indeed, yes—and some one of importance too," replied Colonel Dent, with an amused smile. "Don't you know the lady-killer is to arrive this afternoon?"

"By Jove—no—is he?" ejaculated Kennedy, with a small show of contemptuous interest. "Well, I am really rather glad to hear it. The lady-killer's appearance always heralds a certain amount of amusement. We shall have some fun, depend upon it, Colonel," and he rolled lazily round on the grass until his face was turned up towards the big tree so kindly shedding its shade above them.

"Who is the lady-killer?" asked a soft voice from the depths of a low basket chair a little way beyond.

Colonel Dent laughed.

"Don't you really know, Miss Craven?" he replied, raising himself from his lounging position, and embracing his knees with both arms. "I thought every one had heard of Dare Leighton, the lady-killer. Not to know him argues yourself unknown."

Audrey Craven shrugged her shoulders.

"Then I am afraid I must include myself in that class, for I really have never heard of this celebrity before. Tell me," leaning forward with a new interest on her lovely flower-like face, "what has he done to merit such a title?"

"Done!" repeated Kennedy contemptuously. "Why, just what his name implies. Killed the hearts of all the fair sex he comes across. Ladies tremble like lambs before his very glance, and their cheeks flush and pale at the mere sight of him. But he goes his way, and after amusing himself freely at their expense, pays no heed to his slaughter. There is really nothing that Dare Leighton would not dare to do," with a faint smile at his own feeble joke.

"How very interesting!" said Audrey, her grey eyes sparkling with anticipation. "You really make me quite anxious to see this hero."

"What hero?" asked a new voice, coming abruptly from behind the big tree under which they were sitting; and turning suddenly they found the only son of the house, Lord Clavering, standing in their midst.

"Why, the new arrival," replied Audrey, looking up into his face with a smile. "Mr. Leighton, the lady-killer. I have been hearing all about his triumphant career, and am eagerly looking forward to meeting him."

Lord Clavering frowned, and glanced down at her up-raised face with an expression which spoke volumes.

"An enviable reputation indeed," he replied, his tone betraying his annoyance, for to his jealous keenly anxious eyes there seemed to be a new interest on Audrey Craven's face, and no one knew better than he that for such a reputation to precede a man was quite enough to envelope him in an unreal atmosphere of mystery to the average female mind.

"Shall I too be expected to fall a victim to his fascinations?" she asked, her eyes dancing with pleasure and a firm belief in her own power.

"Why, of course!" replied Kennedy with decision. "Every one else bows down before him, and why should you be an exception to the rule?"

Lord Clavering frowned again. Dare Leighton's victories were generally easy enough, and he knew full well that there was no necessity to pave his way beforehand by rousing a sense of warfare in Audrey Craven's mind. Ever since he had first seen her he had made up his mind to win her for his wife, and he had no intention of sharing his favours with the lady-killer.

"I think you all do Mr. Leighton an injustice," said another girl, who was sitting a yard away from Audrey. "His manners certainly tend to give wrong impressions, but I don't think the harm he does is done with deliberate intention."

The men sitting round started guiltily. All three of them had for the moment forgotten the presence of Blanche Bennett, and each one of them knew they had been saying the wrong thing; for the fair-haired girl sitting in their midst was known to be one of Leighton's latest victims, and their names had been universally coupled together during the past season. Was it not by her special request that Lady Carsfield had asked the lady-killer down to Abbotswood, for hope still lived in Blanche Bennett's heart, and the fierce belief still lingered that she might be the triumphant exception to the rule.

"Heaven preserve me from blackening his stainless record," replied Kennedy maliciously. "That is what makes him so victorious, I suppose. 'His strength is as the strength of ten, because his heart is pure,'" and an amused smile curved his lips over the quotation.

Blanche flushed angrily.

"Here is Mr. Leighton," she said, her eyes straying through the overhanging tree to where Lady Carsfield was standing with her new guest. "He has evidently been here some time, because he has changed into flannels and is ready for tennis."

Four heads turned quickly in the direction where she was looking, and there was an eager look of expectancy in Audrey Craven's eyes as the distant couple moved slowly towards their shady nook under the tree.

Dare Leighton was certainly good to look at. He was tall and well set up, with sunny blue eyes, and a close cropped brown head, and, above all, on his face lay an expression which seemed to carry out the name he bore.

Lord Clavering watched him with a sinking heart, and then he cast a covert look at Audrey's face ; for he knew that it took a close knowledge of Dare Leighton to find out the real nature lying well concealed beneath his gay debonair exterior.

A moment later and Lady Carsfield brought him under the ilex.

"I think you know every one here," she said in her pleasant way, as he went round the party shaking hands. "Miss Bennett and you are old friends, of course, so introductions are unnecessary."

"Not quite everyone," he said, his eyes straying towards Audrey with a world of undisguised admiration in their depths, which sent the angry red into Lord Clavering's face.

"Ah, Audrey—of course, I had forgotten you had never met before," she continued with a smile. "Let me introduce you to Miss Craven," and Dare strode across the grass to the low basket chair and threw himself down beside it.

"How cool and comfortable you all look here," he began, raising his bold eyes to her face, while the men-servants brought out tea and arranged it on a gipsy table in front of Lady Carsfield. "It seems a very haven of peace and refuge after my long, dusty train journey."

Audrey's grey eyes returned his look with interest, and as she replied to his remark a sudden great desire came over her. A desire to avenge the many injuries he had wrought upon her own sex, and to see him broken and humiliated at her feet, as he had humiliated and broken the hearts of many in the time gone by.

Was it not only a meet punishment for his misdeeds ? She knew the power full well which lay in every shaft of her grey eyes. It had always vanquished before, so why should it fail her now ; and as she thought on these things her heart seemed to leap with a sudden exultation.

Poor, beautiful, foolish moth ! How often it flies and circles within the light of the candle, and not until its wings are singed and tingling with its pain, does it realize its folly and its utter human weakness.

"How lazy you all are," said Lady Carsfield when tea was over, and a contented silence seemed to have settled over the party. "Are not any of you going to have a game of tennis ?"

Dare Leighton jumped up from the grass and turned towards Audrey.

"Will you play with me, Miss Craven ?" he asked.

She looked back at him for a moment in silence, and then stretched out her hand for her racquet.

"Yes!" she said slowly. "Only do not expect me to be too energetic on such a hot afternoon;" and then she rose from her chair and strolled away with him across the lawn.

And four pairs of eyes watched them go, realizing with different sensations that Dare Leighton had already got in the thin end of the wedge.

II.

It was a week later, and there was a big dinner-party at Abbotswood, for on the morrow the house-party was to break up and scatter northwards in search of Scotch breezes and slaughter.

Audrey Craven stood by her open window, waiting and thinking just for a few moments before she went downstairs and joined the buzz of many voices in the drawing-room below.

Only a week had passed since Dare Leighton had first come to Abbotswood, but what a difference that week had made to her life. She had set herself to work a so-called mission—to wipe out the many bitter injuries this man had inflicted on her sex, and to bring down a righteous retribution on his head. And so far she had succeeded only too well, for Dare Leighton had no eyes for any one else in her presence and no ears for anything save the words which proceeded out of her lips.

Yes, she had done her work well, but there was another result of her scheme which she had never reckoned upon, for her own little barque, riding high on the waters of pride and vindication, had been suddenly swept down with the surging tide and torrents.

No! She had never counted on that. She had never thought that the fatal web of fascination he exercised over every one else would fall on her too, and draw her faster day by day into its clinging resistless toils.

The rest of the house-party watched matters with anxious, dissatisfied eyes. Colonel Dent and Jack Kennedy shrugged their shoulders regretfully. She was too good for such sport, they thought; but with Lord Clavering and Blanche Bennett it was a different thing. It was a matter of life and death to them, and they each grew more silent as the days crept by.

And how would it all end? Ah! surely this time it would be a case of "they were happy ever after," and Audrey took a parting glance at her mirror, and threw back her head in the pride and triumph of her youth. The man could not live who would make a toy of her, and add her name to the list of his many victories.

The thought brought a flush to her fair face, and she was looking unusually lovely as she entered the drawing-room in her trailing satin gown.

"I am to have the pleasure of taking you in," said Lord Clavering going to meet her, and studying her face keenly as he spoke. Was it fancy or did a shade of disappointment creep into her grey eyes?

"I seem to have seen nothing of you these last few days," he began after they were all seated and the soup was going round. "Leighton has usurped so much of your attention that no one else has been able to get near you."

Audrey's eyes dropped towards her plate, and he could see her black lashes quivering on her cheek.

Clavering's spirits sank at the sight. Was it really possible that the prize he so craved for his own was going to be wrecked on the treacherous shores of Dare Leighton's self-love? He caught his breath sharply, for the mere thought seemed to probe him like a knife, and rouse his fiercely curbed passion into a licking flame.

"Audrey," he continued, dropping his voice to a whisper, and taking no notice of the watchful glances cast at them both by Blanche Bennett and Leighton, who were sitting opposite. "I cannot put it off any longer. I must speak now—you know what I am going to say."

She raised her eyes in a dumb appealing way to his face. If only she could say something to check the hurried words trembling on his lips, but a great lump seemed to rise in her throat and prevent her speaking.

"Will you marry me, dear?" he went on, in the simple straightforward way which always characterized him. "You know what it means to me. You know it has been my great desire ever since I first saw you."

The lace on the front of her white gown rose and fell with one great sigh. If he had spoken those words a week ago she knew she would have given him the answer he craved, but since that time a new force had come into her life, sweeping away the old feelings and the old landmarks at one fell blow.

She raised her eyes and glanced at the man opposite. He was watching her—watching her with all his heart in his blue orbs, and a sort of challenge in their depths. Surely she could not be mistaken in that look. He was daring her as he had dared many another in his time, to take his heart and will out of his keeping.

There was a faint restless movement at her side, and Clavering spoke again.

"Audrey, I am waiting for your answer. Yes, or no, dear? Oh, be merciful. God knows how happy I will try to make you. No, don't turn away your head. Look at me straight, and give me your answer of your own free will."

But, alas, that glance across the table had done its work, and he knew it. Even before the faltering "no" left her lips, he recognised that one more ignoble victory lay at Dare Leighton's feet.

Dinner dragged its weary length through at last, and when the men joined the ladies later on in the drawing-room, Leighton hastened across the vacant place by Audrey's side.

"It is so hot in here," he pleaded. "Won't you come into the conservatory for a little while?"

And she went with him without a word, while Clavering set his teeth hard and bit his lip until the blood came.

Had he been mistaken in Leighton after all? Was there real meaning and intention this time in his eyes? The evening would surely tell.

A little way beyond, he heard Kennedy and Colonel Dent discussing the situation in their cold-blooded cynicism.

"Leighton scalp-hunting again, I see," said the former, curling his lip contemptuously.

"I think it is something more than scalp-hunting this time," replied the Colonel with a fleeting glance at Clavering. "Stealing would perhaps be a more appropriate word."

"By Jove, yes! The man deserves to have his neck wrung. However, it can't go on for ever. He must come to grief some time or other. Some squaw will prove a little too much for him one day."

The Colonel laughed and Clavering turned away sick at heart to where Blanche Bennett was sitting unattended on the sofa close by. There was somehow a great sympathy for her in his heart as he sat down beside her.

Meanwhile, Leighton and Audrey had found a comfortable secluded nook among the palms in the conservatory. Some one was singing in the drawing-room beyond, and the distant sound of the music seemed to harmonize and mingle in with the soft splash of the fountain near at hand. All around came the heavy scent of the flowers, seeming to close them in with a mist of love and fragrance.

A gentle song of lullaby came to an end, and then a man's voice broke the stillness, rising and falling in the sickly-sweet sentimentality of one of the songs of the day.

"Teach me how to kiss, dear,
Teach me how to love."

It was so easy as the words floated towards them to act on the inspiration they suggested. Dare Leighton had done it often enough before, and he was not likely to miss his chance now.

He put out his hand.

"I love you," he whispered, his voice taking that soft cadence to which it had been so well trained. "I love you more than all the world beside."

She did not move in the tension of the moment, and his arm slid gently round her, drawing her ever nearer and nearer in his clasp. Only her lashes quivered and her lips trembled as his face bent closer over hers.

"Teach me how to kiss, dear," came the refrain again, but Leighton required little coaching in his part, and before the song had finished he had taught Audrey Craven a lesson she was likely to remember for many a day to come.

The minutes crept by on silken wings, and still they two sat on in their dimly-lighted corner, taking no heed of time, and living for a short while in a paradise of their own.

Presently the man in the drawing-room began to sing again, and another song from the same comic opera came drifting towards them—

"When we are married—why what will you do?
I will be sweet as I can be to you;
I will be tender and I will be true,
When I am married, sweetheart, to you."

A great sigh left Leighton's lips, and the words seemed to break the spell. Marriage had no part in his little programme.

"Why do pleasant things so soon come to an end?" he said regretfully. "When I am far from civilisation I shall remember and think of this evening."

Audrey freed herself from his encircling arms, and regarded him with great startled eyes. Somehow the words sounded ominous and seemed to strike the knell of a coming disaster.

"You are not going away?" she questioned with a great fear in her voice.

He shrugged his shoulders as though it were not in his power to help matters.

"Yes, unfortunately. The party was made up months ago, and I cannot cry off now. We start in two days' time for Somaliland. I hope to get some big game shooting."

"How long do you mean to be away?" she asked slowly, while her voice sounded far away to her own ears.

He shrugged his shoulders again.

"As long as our fancy pleases, I expect. Two years, or perhaps more. It all depends on how we enjoy ourselves, but when a man once gets into such wild parts he does not hurry to get back. I wonder what you will be doing when I return? You will be married most probably, with fresh ties and fresh interests, and old friends will be quite forgotten."

She caught her breath in the agony of the moment, while the palms and flowers seemed to dance in a mist before her eyes. And still the song went on with its cruel, relentless words, burning into her brain with a scorching, scarring touch, which seemed to verily brand her pride and lay it low.

"Love is not all the poets would say;
Sometimes it lasts but a year and a day,
Sometimes the day, love, without any year;
Love is not all it's cracked up to be, dear."

She waited just a moment until the music died away, and then forced a wintry smile to her lips.

"No," she said slowly, "I don't think I have quite such a bad memory as that. You will come and see me, won't you, even if I am married?"

He laughed, and a certain feeling of relief stole over him. She had grasped the inevitable better than most of them did. He really felt quite grateful to her, and really sorry to part. She was so lovely and so charming withal, that had it not been for his love of liberty and selfish amusement he might have forged his fetters for good and all. But things had turned out well as it happened, and in a few days' time, when English shores had been left behind, Audrey Craven would doubtless have completely faded from his mind.

"I think we ought to go back," she said at last. "They will be wondering where we are."

He started as her soft voice broke in upon his meditations, and followed her regretfully. It was so pleasant in that cool, secluded place, with the gentle splash of the fountain making a soothing accompaniment to their low tones. He would remember the monotonous drip of the fountain he told himself. It would remind him of one of the pleasantest moments of his life.

III.

It was two years later and Abbotswood was *en fête*, for the only son of the house had just brought home his bride, and a big ball was being given in honour of the great event.

The clock in the old tower had just struck the half-hour after nine, and hardly had the last sound died away into the still summer night, before one carriage after another began to roll up the long drive.

The house was crammed with guests for the occasion, and with the exception of one man the party included the same people who had been staying there two summers before. Colonel Dent was there, looking just the same as ever, if a little greyer perhaps; and Blanche Bennett was present, too, her fair pretty face looking younger and happier than of yore, for her engagement had just been announced to Jack Kennedy, and the fact had given unlimited satisfaction to all her friends.

Beautiful Audrey was there, too, looking lovelier than ever in a shimmering satin gown, and causing many a head to turn and glance a second time at her perfect face and serious dark grey eyes; while happiest of all perhaps was Lord Clavering, the bridegroom, as he moved among the crowd of guests collected in his honour, and watched the many envious and admiring glances cast at the girl by his side.

Only Dare Leighton was absent, still hunting lions doubtless in East Africa, and perhaps dreaming of future triumphs when he returned once more to his native shores.

Audrey's face whitened a little as she moved through the familiar rooms, which could not fail to recall all the bitter humiliation of two years ago ; and for just a short while she sank into silence, living over and over again the pain and anguish of that terrible time.

A sharp exclamation from her partner, Colonel Dent, brought her back to the present again, and she turned her face inquiringly to his.

"Great Scott !" he said, with vast astonishment written in every line of his face. "Do you see who has just arrived ? By all that's odd, if it isn't Dare Leighton himself ! You remember Dare Leighton, the lady-killer, don't you ?" looking down at her with an amused smile. "See, he is just shaking hands with Lady Scarsfield !"

Audrey turned her face slowly in the direction he indicated. Yes, it was indeed Dare Leighton, handsome and sunny-eyed as of yore, with a gay laugh on his lips and a dark sun tan on his clean-cut face.

Once more her chest rose and fell in one great sigh, making the diamonds glisten and gleam among the lace. Did she remember Dare Leighton, the lady-killer, forsooth ! when even now the mere mention of his name had power to bring a flush of shame to her fair face.

Was it possible she had ever really loved this man ? Or was it only a fatal fascination which he had thrown over her for the time being ?

She looked at him once again, and again the ~~keen~~ desire came into her heart—to avenge the wrong he had done her, and make him writhe and suffer as she had done in the time gone by, to lay at rest that little restless spirit of regret which still troubled her at times.

"It is curious his being here to-night," she replied with rather a forced smile, still keeping her eyes on his well-remembered face.

He seemed to feel the magnetism of her glance, as a moment later he turned and saw her, and with a glad look on his face was hurrying across the room to her side.

"You here, Miss Craven ?" he began delightedly. "Well, this is indeed a surprise ! I had not counted on such a pleasure. We must have a talk over old times together. Don't tell me I am too late for a dance ?"

She flashed a look at Colonel Dent as she took up her programme, which he seemed to understand, for a moment later he had strolled away, and left them alone together.

"I have only the next one left, which is a square. You can have that, if you like."

He drew his brows together in a puckered frown.

"Only that," he replied disappointedly. "Well, I suppose I must

be thankful for small mercies. A hungry dog is grateful for even the least crumb. Shall we sit it out?"—moving slowly out of the ball-room as he spoke. "We can talk more comfortably in a quieter spot."

She assented with a smile, and together they bent their steps in the direction of the conservatory. He noticed the glances of admiration cast at her as they went slowly along and a feeling of possessive pride rose within him. She was even more beautiful than when he had last seen her two years ago, and his eyes rested contentedly on her diamond-crowned head and lovely face. It was worth two years of knocking about the world to come home and find this regal-looking girl awaiting him. He remembered how she had loved him in the time gone by, and he asked himself whether it were not high time he gave up his wandering life, and settled down into domestic happiness such as she would give him.

They had reached the conservatory by this time, and was it chance only which made her turn towards the old nook so securely hidden away among the palms?

A sort of smile swept over his face as he followed her. Then she remembered also. She, too, had not forgotten that night among the flowers, when for one short space of time their hearts had met together in a close-locked union.

She sank on to a low couch, and he sat down beside her. Everything was just as it had been before; even the flowers seemed the same, and from the distance came the triumphant sounds of the band, almost drowning the gentle splash of the fountain close at hand. The fountain, whose steady drip had often sounded in his ears in far-off lands, when a deathly silence reigned around, and only the stars looked down on him from above.

He moved nearer and taking her fan from her restless hand began to wave it slowly to and fro.

"Tell me all the news," he began, his eyes dwelling on the beauty of her fair face. "For of course I know so little. I only arrived home late this evening without giving my people any warning, consequently I found they had all come off to this ball and left an empty house behind them. It seems so strange to be back in civilisation once again. I simply devoured an English paper on my way down from town."

She laughed a little and raised her grey eyes to his.

"What do you want to know?" she asked. "So many things have happened in two years. England and France nearly came to blows last autumn, and the French president died this spring. Then the Prince of Wales has——"

He interrupted her with an impatient movement.

"Do you suppose I want to hear things of that kind?" he said reproachfully. "What interest can they have for me? No; it is personal history I want to hear. News about people I know—news about yourself."

She hesitated a moment while her fingers played with the gardenias in the front of her gown.

"There were several interesting engagements this last season," she replied at length. "Mr. Kennedy's, for instance. He and Miss Bennett are to be married early in the autumn."

"Is that really so?" he replied with interest. "Somehow, I never imagined they would make a match of it. I always thought"—with a little self-satisfied smile—"that she had rather a penchant for me."

For a moment his unbounded egotism seemed to strike her dumb, but ere his smile had died away, she found her voice again.

"No; I think her tastes are a little more elevated than that," she replied. "Blanche Bennett is nothing if not intellectual."

He stared back at her, for such speeches were rare from her lips. He could only suppose she felt a little bitter for his two years' neglect, and the mere thought was quite sufficient to restore him speedily in his self-esteem.

"Perhaps you are right," he remarked indifferently. "Blue-stockings are not much in my line after all. It is generally the butterflies of this world who capture me. I revel in their beauty, and their sunny lives."

"Poor butterflies," said Audrey slowly, looking away from him to the gorgeous pageant of flowers beyond. "Their sunshine lasts such a little time, does it not? And more often than not some cruel hand grasps hold of them and rubs the dust from their glittering wings. It may be play to the cruel hand, but it is generally death to them."

"What else are they meant for?" he asked, hardly grasping her meaning at the moment. "Is it not better to have a short life and a merry one than to drag out a long, weary, monotonous existence?"

"Ah, I daresay! But the twilight comes sooner or later to all."

He looked down at her, wondering at her new seriousness which yet seemed to make her doubly beautiful, and all at once his eyes seemed to be opened to her worth. She had been his once and she should be his again—not for a time only, but for always. He had never failed before, and why now, when every pulse of his hot blood was tingling with a mighty desire.

"I hope you have not reached the twilight yet?" he said, dropping his voice to the old well-remembered whisper. "I can only think of you in the sunshine. Somehow you are not meant for the grey dull days."

She looked up at him and he saw a great light lying in the depths of her eyes.

"No," she replied; "it is mid-day with me. My sun is shining in all the zenith of his power, bathing the future with a rosy, golden mist."

He caught his breath as he listened to her words. What else could she mean but that his sudden return had brought the sunshine

into her life, and tinted the future years with the golden breath of hope?

"Do you remember," he continued, "how we two sat here once before? How we talked of the years hence and what we should be doing when I returned? How I supposed that you would perhaps be married and have no memory left for your old friend?"

"Yes—I remember well," she answered, her face paling visibly at his question. Did not every word he uttered bring back to her the bitter knowledge of her own weakness?

Ever nearer and nearer he moved. The music, the silence of the hour and her wondrous beauty, were filling his brain with an intoxicating sense of pleasure, driving out of his head all his usual far-sightedness, and his desire for the hour's amusement. In that great moment he knew he loved her—loved her, not with a fleeting passion, but with all the power of his strength—a love which would last him even until the end of all things. He had suspected it often before, in the silence of those quiet nights in far-off Africa, but with his usual carelessness he had driven the knowledge from him until this moment, when it stood up before him in its giant strength, dwarfing all other feelings in its magnitude.

"Oh!" he continued breathlessly, "if I had found you married, what would life have been to me then? Not twilight, but utter death, for the light would have gone out for ever and aye."

She shivered a little at his words, and made a slight movement as though she would rise, but he laid his hand on her arm and held her fast.

"Don't go!" he whispered hoarsely. "I must say it, even though all the powers combined should seek to stay my words. I loved you before, Audrey, but I love you ten thousand times more now, and I cannot do without you."

Her head fell back and she strove to free herself, but still he went on in his passionate pleading voice :

"Say you will marry me—promise before I let you go! It is all the world to me and nothing else besides. Audrey, speak to me, my love, my life! I can hear some one coming to fetch you from the room beyond."

She wrenched her hand away from his clasp, and rising hurriedly, stood tall and straight before him.

"I cannot stay," she cried breathlessly, "for the next dance has already begun."

"What does that matter to you or me? A dance is so easily cut, and who thinks anything of it? Quick, the steps are coming nearer! Your answer, Audrey—speak, for Heaven's sake!"

She opened her lips but no sound came, and her face grew whiter than before, while ever nearer and nearer came the footsteps, until a moment later Lord Clavering's tall figure appeared from behind the palms.

For a short second he stood still, his eyes wandering from one white face to the other, and then he moved towards Audrey.

"This is my dance, I think."

A great light shone in her eyes at the sight of him, and as she laid her fingers on his arm she turned her head slowly towards the waiting man beyond.

"I never cut dances," she said, with her eyes fastened deliberately on his face, "and especially not my husband's;" then without another word she moved slowly away with Lord Clavering until the palms and flowers hid her from his sight.

The troubled spirit of regret had been driven out at last, and her bitter injury avenged, but like the restless spirit of old it had gone into fresh fields and pastures new, even into the mind of the man standing in a dumb remorse by the fountain's side.

How the water splashed in its monotonous steady drip! He remembered the sound of it before, and he would carry the sound with him even to his grave.

FATEFUL DAYS.

CERTAIN superstitions die hard ; and that which pronounces for the existence of lucky and unlucky dates has survived for many centuries. It is said that in Belgium January 13th is considered as an unfortunate day, and its falling this year upon a Friday is not looked upon as a good omen for 1899. Almanacs still exist which retain the old world custom of marking off certain dates as being fortunate or unfortunate on which to commence undertakings ; but it is doubtful if even the purchasers of these prophetic calendars would nowadays be so much influenced by their warnings as to postpone a necessary journey, or to inconveniently foredate an engagement, in obedience to these "danger signals."

It would be difficult to explain the principle of selection upon which, in many old "books of days," certain dates are noted as being fortunate or the reverse. An early seventeenth century writer gives "the Angel Gabriel" as an authority for the statement that "there be twenty-eight days in the year which are ever to be marked as very fortunate days, on which to use merchandise, sow seed, plant trees, build houses, or undertake journeys ; and these days be January 3rd and 13th ; February 5th and 28th ; March 3rd, 22nd, and 30th ; April 5th, 22nd, and 29th ; May 4th and 28th ; June 3rd and 8th ; July 12th, 13th, and 15th ; August 12th ; September 1st, 7th, 24th, and 28th ; October 4th and 15th ; November 13th and 19th ; December 23rd and 26th."

This list of dates is said to have been "revealed to the good Joseph" by the angel. "Children born upon these days could never be poor ; those who were put to college on these days would become great scholars, those who were put to any trade became good artificers, those who were put to merchandise became rich."

Yet among these "lucky days" is enumerated January 13th, which is considered so infelicitous by present day Belgians. According to "an old Arabian philosopher," quoted by the same seventeenth century writer, "there be three Mondays in the year on which it is unfortunate to let blood or to begin any notable work—namely, the first Monday in April, upon which Cain was born, and his brother Abel slain ; the first Monday in August, upon which day Sodom and Gomorrah were confounded ; and the last Monday in December, upon which day Judas Iscariot was born."

That the "first Monday in August" is still an infelicitous date upon which to undertake a journey will not be disputed by those travellers who have inadvertently selected "St. Lubbock" for their date of departure, and been forced to mingle in an English Bank

Holiday crowd of excursionists; but from whence did the "old Arabian philosopher" derive his exact chronology regarding the dates of the birth of Cain, etc.?

No less than fifty-three days of the year are marked as "most dangerous" in a little work published in 1616—viz.: January 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 10th, 15th, 17th, and 19th; February 7th, 10th, 17th, 27th, and 28th; March 15th, 16th, and 28th; April 7th, 10th, 16th, 20th, and 21st; May 7th, 15th, and 20th; June 4th, 10th, and 22nd; July 15th and 20th; August 1st, 19th, 20th, 29th, and 30th; September 3rd, 4th, 6th, 7th, 21st, and 22nd; October 4th, 16th, and 24th; November 5th, 6th, 28th, and 29th; December 6th, 7th, 9th, 15th, 17th, and 22nd.

No reason is given for the selection of these dates as unfortunate; and December 28th, the Festival of the Innocents, for centuries considered as an unlucky day, does not figure among the six dates in December, which are marked with a "black stone." Philippe de Comines has chronicled how Louis XI. invariably refused to transact any important business upon "Childermas day." On the other hand, three of the "fortunate days" in the list supplied by the "good angel," viz., February 28th, July 15th, October 4th, are here marked as dangerous. "Who shall decide when doctors disagree?"

BIRTHDAYS have not always been looked upon as days of good fortune; Aubrey believed that most of the misfortunes which befell him took place upon the anniversaries of his birth, and mentions a maternal uncle as having undergone a like experience, this relative eventually "dying upon the anniversary of his birth . . . as he had, but a week before his departure, foretold." A coincidence between the dates of birth and death, which Sir Thomas Browne quaintly describes as "the tail of the serpent returning to its mouth, and the first day making the last," has not been of infrequent occurrence. It was said of the Duke of Lunenberg:

"The same day life did give,
And made him cease to live."

Elisabeth of York, queen of Henry VII., was born and died upon February 11th. It is recorded of Philip, Earl of Arundel, who died in the Tower in 1589, that "it was about twelve o'clock at noon, in which hour he was also born into the world, arraigned, condemned, and adjudged to death, that he, without grief or groan, surrendered up his happy soul to God."

Cardinal Wolsey is supposed to have been influenced by some astronomical prediction in his positive fixing of the hour of his own decease; "at eight of the clock you shall lose your master." Wolsey expired the day after uttering this prediction, exactly as the clock struck eight.

Saturday has been an ill-omened day to the royal family of

England since the time of William III., who (like so many of his successors and their kindred) expired upon this day of the week. Thursday was equally fatal to the Tudors; Henry VIII. and his three children, Mary, Elizabeth, Edward, all passing away upon a Thursday; and, "as pious Romanists failed not to remark," Edward VI., the last male heir of the Tudor line, deceased upon an anniversary of the execution of Sir Thomas More.

Friday is usually considered as an unlucky day, but an American writer, some forty years ago, collected a number of dates which seemed to show that, across the Atlantic, Friday is linked with many auspicious associations. It was upon a Friday that Columbus first sailed on his voyage of discovery in August, 1492; upon Friday, October 12th, 1492, that he first discovered land; upon a Friday he started on his return to Spain, and upon a Friday arrived in safety at Palos. On Friday, November 10th, 1620, the pilgrims in the *Mayflower* made the harbour of Province Town; and upon a Friday they landed at Plymouth Rock. George Washington was born upon a Friday, and the American victories of Saratoga and Yorktown were won upon the same day of the week. "Thus, by numerous examples, we see that Americans need never dread to begin upon a Friday any undertaking however momentous," concludes the Transatlantic writer. Friday was an equally fortunate date to Golsalvo, who won many of his victories on this day of the week. Sir Winston Churchill (father of the famous Duke of Marlborough) believed that "Friday is my own lucky day; it is the day upon which I was born, christened, and married, the day whereon I have had sundry deliverances (too long to relate) from perils by land and sea, from false brethren, from perils of law suits, etc. I was knighted (all unexpectedly to myself) on the same day, and several good accidents have happened to me upon it; and I am so superstitious in belief of its good omen that I choose to begin any considerable action that concerns me on the same day."

Saturday—the Jewish Sabbath—was an infelicitous date to the Jewish Temple; upon that day of the week it was successively taken by Pompey, Herod, and Titus. Cromwell believed that September 3rd, the date upon which he gained his famous victories of Dunbar and Worcester, was his especially "fortunate day"; but on this date he died in 1650, as had been foretold by Colonel Lindsay, who professed to have been witness of a secret colloquy between Cromwell and a mysterious stranger, upon the morning of Worcester fight, when Lindsay—who had, unnoticed, followed Cromwell at a distance—saw the General take his way alone into a wood and there sign a scroll presented to him by the stranger, after some haggling about the length of time.

"I would have it for twenty-one years, not for seven."

Believing, as he afterwards stated, that Cromwell had thus sold himself to the Evil One, Lindsay resolved "never to strike for him

more"; and, in fact, deserted after the first charge. As Lindsay had predicted, Cromwell's death occurred seven years after his "crowning victory" at Worcester.

Associations, for good or evil, cling tenaciously about especial dates. The Sinclairs long looked upon Monday as an unfortunate day for their clan. "No gentleman of the name of Sinclair will put on green apparel, or cross the Ord upon a Monday . . . for the clan were dressed in green apparel and crossed the Ord upon a Monday, on their way to Flodden field, where they fought and fell in the service of their country, leaving scarcely a representative behind." It would assuredly be no discouragement to a British force to find that they were called upon to give battle to a foe upon the anniversary of Trafalgar or of Waterloo.

Belief in the fatefulness of certain days was once devoutly held by learned philosophers, and in classic days elevated to a place in the religious system by the practice of the rites of the ancient augurs. No Oriental potentate undertook a business of importance without first making inquiries regarding a "fortunate hour" for the enterprise. There is a Hindoo legend of a princess who died unwedded because the astrologer had discovered that only one special hour in her life would be a propitious one for her bridal. This auspicious moment was to be carefully noted upon one of the ancient "clepsydra" or "water clocks," which measured time by the dripping of water from one vessel into another, upon the same principle as the hours are noted by the flowing of sand through an hour-glass. Lucian, writing in the second century, alludes to a mechanical contrivance of this description, in which, when the water, which was constantly flowing out of one vessel, had reached a certain level in another, it drew away —by means of a rope attached to a piston in the water vessel—the ledge upon which a weight rested, and this weight falling upon a bell caused it to sound. This is supposed to have been the earliest description of a "striking clock."

In the case of the Oriental princess, the expectant bride is said to have looked into a water clock, which measured time by the subsidence of an "hour cup," which sank as the liquid flowed away through a small hole at the bottom of the vessel. By accident a pearl became detached from the girl's dress, fell into the basin, and stopped this tiny orifice. The non-subsidence of the time-marking cup was only noted when the auspicious hour for the bridal had passed away for ever, and the princess was therefore forced to die unwedded.

Sir Thomas Browne firmly believed in the "dangerous years" of forty-nine and sixty-three, and modern medical science does not wholly disown the idea of the existence of such "climacterics, or critical periods of life."

A writer in "Hone's Year Book" of 1832 alludes to some curious "day superstitions" current at that time in Perthshire. "That day of the week upon which May 14th happened to fall, was deemed

unlucky throughout the rest of the year ; none choosing to marry or to transact important business upon it."

That May is an unfortunate month in which to wed is a superstition which dates back to the time of Ovid ; but the Perthshire superstition included January as an equally inauspicious period for entrance into the bonds of wedlock ; and it was also considered unlucky "to have the banns of marriage proclaimed at the end of one quarter of the year, and to be married in the next."

Satirists, from the days of Quevedo, have scoffed at these popular superstitions, the Spanish sixteenth century writer publishing a mock list of fateful days. "Tuesday is a good day on which to believe nothing that flatterers say. . . Thursday is an unlucky day for those who travel abroad without money, and for those who are cast into gaol."

Yet may not a lingering credence in the existence of "the luck of days" be justly described as one of those superstitions "from which the wisest among us is seldom wholly free"?

Whenever Easter Day falls on March 25th, is there not a general disposition to discover, in the course of public events, some verification of the old adage?—

"When Easter falls in our Lady's lap
It bodes the country some mishap."

A "prophetic almanac" published at the beginning of 1861, announced that certain aspects of the planets would be, during the May of that year, "evil for persons born upon or near the 26th August ; among them I regret to see the worthy Prince Consort of these realms." It was in December, not in May, 1861, that the Prince Consort died ; but it is said that even this approximation between a prediction and its fulfilment largely increased the sale of this prophesying almanac in 1862.

As a rule the modern predictors of fateful days or periods wisely couch their soothsaying in such vague and general terms that it is seldom difficult to trace some connection between a prophecy and its fulfilment. And does not Lord Bacon say of most predictions that "men mark when they hit, and not when they miss"?



BY SICILIAN SEAS.

By C. E. C. WEIGALL.

I. THE PALACE OF THE CORLEOTTIS.

IN one of the narrow back streets of Taormina, in the green island of Sicily, there stood a rugged grey castellated building, called by the country folk the palace of the Corleottis.

Long ago it was one of the great houses of the Sicilian nobles ; perhaps ready night and day to stand the siege that the inhabitants of the island were always ready to meet from land and sea. The courtyard then had rung with the clatter of armed feet, and from every window the flare of torch and lamp and huge wood fire shot out into the world.

There might then have been a great garden there, set round with roses and lavender bushes, and huge sunflowers ; and yew-bordered walks, where stately peacocks sunned themselves, and the ladies of the palace trailed their silken gowns over the smooth turf, or sang love songs of Tasso to their lutes, while their lords were away on the border and coast land, foraging for the wealth that they were compelled to wring from the richer nations.

But the days of the glory of the palace of the Corleottis were long past ; and it stood there, a monument of the fallen fortunes of Sicily, only a shade less ruined and broken than the Greek amphitheatre newly discovered at its gates, in the garden of the church of San Stefano.

The palace was entered by a broken gate that stood open on its rusted hinges day and night. Above it was carved a great falcon, with a crown in her beak, to which the remnants of gilding and scarlet hung pitifully. Inside the courtyard the walls had been frescoed in coarse lines of black upon the white stone. But now only one scene remained in its entirety ; Adam and Eve with the apple of Temptation, that had been held out to the first man since the world was young.

Stables and outbuildings, broken and empty, turned their mouldy faces to the stillness of the deserted place, and the neighbours' cocks and hens clucked busily across the broken pavement, searching for scraps of food that might have escaped the keen eye of the sparrows in the eaves.

Outside the gates, against the warm south wall, a fruit-seller had set his stall, and was shouting his wares with a shrillness that was disconcerting, bandying jests too with the Custom-officers at the village gate and the fat old woman in her yellow apron who kept the

grocery store on the road to the hotel. The brilliant red of the tomatoes, and the yellow of the oranges, that he had adorned with cool fronds of russet fern and paling autumn leaves, made a grateful splash of colour against the dingy walls of the old palace.

If the last of the Corleotti, who still lived to see the decline of her race, could have seen the desecration of her house, she would have set no store by colour or scent, but would have driven Salvatore Ferrugia from his comfortable seat against the sunny south wall. But she had never crossed the threshold of the palace for well-nigh forty years.

Up the oak staircase, worn, rotten, and broken, she lived, this Emilia Corleotti, in a suite of rooms saved from the universal ruin that had fallen upon her house. With her lived a woman who too had once been prosperous and young, a distant connexion of the great race, who, in the day of Emilia's trouble, had proved to be the one faithful heart on which the sorrow-stricken head had rested.

But Emilia had never recognised her—or indeed anyone—since the hour that had laid her father, dripping and dead from the sea, at her feet, on the marble floor of his house.

She had endured the one grief, with the dumb faith in God that had never failed her. But when she learned that the body of her lover had not been recovered from the sea that was his grave, her mind gave way. The sudden storm had swallowed up every trace of him, and had beaten the life out of his young body on the rocks that fence the coast: beaten it so that perhaps there was no Janni Silvestro to be brought back to her; nothing but the semblance of a humanity that had been noblest of its kind.

Since that hour she had been known as the mad Corleotti of the old palace, and it was only Caterina who knew that she was as harmless as one of the angels of God, and as gentle as the birds she fed every day. Caterina did the house-work and bought the few necessaries for their everyday life, wondering from day to day, till she had wondered for forty years, and they were both old women, how long such life would last.

Every night, as had been her wont since the first day of their betrothal, Emilia lit the lamp and set it in the embrasure of the window.

"He will surely come home to-night, for his fishing has lasted longer than usual; but perhaps the good God has permitted him to catch a great haul of fish," she said always, wistfully, to Caterina, who was spinning flax by the light of a taper stuck in a tin sconce.

"Ay, *anima mia*, you will see him before long," was always Caterina's reply. And when hope died out of the heart of the old woman before her, as it had done so many hundred times since the first day of loss, her tenderness never failed, her kiss was never less consoling. For she too, alas, had loved Silvestro, though he had never guessed it.

He had given her a careless good-day as he passed on his way to beautiful Emilia Corleotti. And often Caterina had cried out in her misery, on the lonely mountain-side where she went with her goats, that her plain face should have kept her away from the touch of the torch of the love-angel, who had sent Janni to her cousin Emilia just because the girl had the Corleotti eyes, brown as a patch of velvet, and hair that was as black above her ivory face as a raven's wing.

Emilia had all the young men in Taormina at her feet, but out of them she had chosen Janni the fisherman, and had given him her heart, with the wild love of the Sicilian race, that is at fever height in love and hate.

The life of the two old women now was very monotonous, for many of their old friends had died, and the new race neither cared nor troubled their heads as to the well-doing of the survivors of a tragedy that is so common in countries where men go down to the sea in ships. But when the days of the fierce winter storms arrived, that shake the quiet of the perfect Sicilian air, the poor crazed brain gave way again, and Emilia had to be kept from beating out her life against the stone walls, as she remembered the fatal night of her desolation.

Sometimes, when Caterina realised that she was growing very old, she wondered who would care for Emilia when the good God called her to Himself.

Emilia would die without her faithful companion, for there would be no one to compel her to swallow the *caffè-latte* and brown bread and honey of their morning meal, or to see that the macaroni was stewed with some appetising morsel of kid to give it nourishment.

These thoughts forced their way in upon her mind in the long watches of the summer night, when Emilia lay sleeping peacefully beside her, and the shadows of Etna fell through the unshuttered window, before the bells began clattering from the Duomo at the dawning. And at such times, Caterina would rise and look out across the sleeping world of the fortress village, and then go back to her rest again, crying out shame upon her untrusting heart, that could doubt the Father of so fair a world. And the moon would look in at two grey-haired women asleep, and the stars would dapple the silk of the coverlet, that would have been worth many liras at the curiosity shop near the German hotel, if Caterina had not deemed it a crime to sell a relic of old days that had the coronet of the Corleottis blazoned among the lilies of the pattern.

It was the same with the silver bowl from which Emilia drank her *caffè-latte*, and the lace shawl which she wore about her thin shoulders. They were priceless, and therefore, for that very reason, impossible to part with.

It was in the dead of night when the great storm arose that made the year of 18—famous.

The wind had awoke at sunset and risen to a tempest before the

red of its setting had died away in the sky over the smoking volcano. And Emilia had gone to bed in a strange mood that alarmed even Caterina, accustomed as she was to her changes of temperament. But she was asleep when the elder woman crept in under the blanket, after a brief prayer for all at sea that night off the dangerous coast, and fell peacefully asleep, with the thunder of the sea in her ears, and the creaking of the trees in the village street reminding her of the swaying cordage of Janni's boat, in which she had once run before the gale, in the days when she was young and the fisherman was still hesitating between beautiful Emilia and well-dowered Caterina.

She woke at last from an uneasy doze with the consciousness that something unaccustomed was in progress, and found the room dimly lighted by the flaring wick in the saucer of oil, and Emilia dressing herself by the window.

"Emilia," she said, trembling; "Emilia, what is it?"

Emilia turned an ecstatic face upon her, with eyes full of a new light that made one forget the seams and wrinkles in the parchment cheek, and the grey hair that had lost all its former lustre.

"Trina, the sea is calling me," she said. "It is necessary for me to go."

And seeing that look upon her face, the elder woman rose, threw a thick cloak about her shoulders, and followed her cousin out into the night. It was not dark, for the moon was at the full, although the scudding clouds across its disc made the night lurid.

Emilia, who had never walked beyond the threshold of the Palazzo for forty years, went in front, with head thrown back, the rain beating on her tall thin figure, and the wind whirling about her, gaining fresh fury round every turn of the winding road that led down to the beach at Giardini.

Caterina following feebly, shivered at the beating rain, and moaned a little at the lash of the north wind in her face. But she followed, still caring for Emilia's safety, as she had done for so long. There was no human being stirring on the road, to whom she might appeal for help. No sound but the roar of the sea and the deafening clatter of the wind in the dried shrubs of the prickly pear on the hill-side. When a night owl shrieked from the ruined Phoenician burial-ground by the side of the road she started with a faint cry, for the sound seemed to be so weird among the stone tombs.

Emilia hurried seawards with unfaltering steps. Past the new hotels, past the gardens and the cottages, down the quiet road to the shore. It seemed to her companion as though a whole lifetime had elapsed before they stood side by side in the shadow of Isola Bella. They looked out at the tossing sea where the spray of the foam-crested waves, roaring landwards, blinded their tired eyes. The little island loomed through the mist, and the restless gulls, that the storm had disturbed from their nesting, circled over the roofless ruin of the abbey on the headland.

Emilia was peering through the darkness intently, with eyes that seemed in their brightness as though they could look to the far end of the world before they were satisfied. Caterina crept a pace nearer to her.

"Emilia," she said again, "what are you seeking?"

But Emilia neither saw nor heard her.

"Emilia!"

The agony of the entreaty went out into the storm, mingling with the hurly-burly of the wind, and reached even the deaf ears of the woman at her side.

"Are you looking for him?—for Janni?"

Even as she spoke, the moon flashed clear of the cloud, and caught the figure of Emilia. And Caterina saw her stoop with a sudden cry, and take something from among the shingle at her feet—a small glittering object that the sea had cast up.

"Janni, Janni, I am coming!" she said strongly and clearly, and fell forward on the shore with her face towards the water.

Caterina fell upon her knees at her side, and lifted the heavy hand. In the palm of it lay a rough gold locket made from a coin, battered and worn, with only a link or two of the chain still remaining. But the letters were clear to see upon its face: J. S.—E. C., entwined in a true lover's knot. It had been the troth gift of Emilia to her lover, and she wore the counterpart of it next her own heart.

Thus—after forty years—the sea gave up its secret, and on the waning of the storm the wandering soul of Emilia went out to the Gate Beautiful to meet the man she loved.

When Caterina, old and weak, fought her way up to the nearest house for help, the rain had ceased, and the moon transfigured the dead face of the last of the Corleottis, smiling as she had never smiled since the day of her desolation. After long waiting—satisfied.

II. TONI.

It was late when Carmela Frascati returned home, and the path up the mountain to her home from the town of Taormina, where she had been shopping, seemed longer and more steep than usual. She was laden with her basket-load of macaroni and anchovies, and the coarse sugar with which they sweeten the coffee that is the universal drink of the Sicilians.

A picturesque figure was Carmela, with her brown, keen face tanned by the weather, and sharp and oval as a Greek head upon a coin. Her dark hair was bound by a fillet of red handkerchief fastened by rough gold pins. And on the top of the handkerchief she balanced her basket with the stately grace of carriage that is the inheritance of the people who walk barefoot betwixt lapis lazuli sea and sky. The earrings in her ears were heavy hoops of gold, in

the centre of which a cock was balanced, crowing with outspread wings.

To-morrow would be the Festa of the little church at Mola—the walled town on the summit of the precipice—and she was thinking, with a little smile, of the necklace of gold coins that she would wear, and the striped skirt and scarlet bodice laced with gold cords wherewith she would adorn herself, and of the fireworks that would flash from every corner of the fortress village, and be seen even on Etna—the *mongibello* where the gloomy fires of the Cyclops sleep.

Her husband, Salvatore, and their little child Toni, were waiting for her now in the farmstead by the roadside, and she knew that on the table was spread their evening meal, and that her husband had set in the green earthenware dish a pile of purple figs and of white grapes that are grown to make the wine, and perhaps even a dishful of sun-red tomatoes from the wall against which the goats were housed in the winter.

She smiled again as she thought of Toni. How sharp he was! Such a clever little lad that even the Padre had praised him only the day before when he said his hymn, lisping it through without a fault.

He was so clever with the hens, too, finding their nests when they laid astray, and bringing home the eggs in his tiny brown hands, so that even the neighbours, with their many children, envied her the possession of her treasure of four years old—her Giovanni Batista Antonio, whom the world called Toni.

The road curved at this point, and she eased the basket from her head and paused for a moment, with her hand grasping the tufts of bracken and spikes of asphodel on the high bank.

The heavy rains of the past week had freshened all the vegetation, and the mountain ash trees by the side of the road were glittering with drops of wet from every rosy berry. The mountains around, the precipice below, were alive with silver torrents, miniature cataracts, and even Etna—the vast, gloomy volcano round which the thoughts of every Sicilian centre fearfully—looked more fresh, more green than usual, on the slopes under its snow-capped head.

The sky was flushing towards sunset, and the world was taking upon it the grey, mysterious glamour that falls like a veil upon the lands where there is no twilight. Before her lay the little house, nestling under the sheer hill, with the precipice above it and beneath, and the vineyard beyond, and the clumps of fig-trees that the little brown *beccaficos* loved to despoil. Behind her lay the lovely town of Taormina, with its grey abbeys and winding streets, and already the bells were beginning to chime for the Angelus.

“Madre! Madre mia!”

The shout made her look up with the joy and pride of motherhood in her face. Above her, on a steep promontory of rock, outlined

against the primrose of the sky, stood Toni, a sturdy figure in his scarlet shirt and bare brown legs, his arms full of downy baby chickens fresh from the egg.

"Oh, *anima mia*—*Toni carissimo*—I am coming!" she answered back again, blowing him a kiss, as he stood dancing there on one foot like a little pixie of the woods and fields, fresh as the evening. But as she looked upward, quickening her steps to reach him the sooner, there fell upon her ear the tremor of a low undercurrent of sound that seemed to start from the distant mountains, and to culminate under her very feet. The sound swelled into a roar that she, the dweller in a mountainous region, knew but too well, and with a rush and a shiver the face of the slope before her slid swiftly down into the precipice.

Her heart gave one wild bound and then stood still as the beads of agony came out upon her brow, and the power of sight died from her eyes, and it was some time before it seemed to her that she realised absolutely that Toni stood upon his peak no longer with the yellow chickens in his hand. He had gone down with the landslip, and her house was left unto her desolate.

The basket fell from her nerveless hands, and she slipped to her knees, for even in the midst of her bitter fear the thought of heavenly help was upon her.

"Oh, God," she cried, "help me, and save my baby now."

It was a simple prayer, prayed, however, from the depths of a true and loving heart, that could hope no help save in God. It was summoned up from a depth of despair, the extent of which she hardly realised as yet. The good God was very kind, very merciful. She rose to her feet, and staggered forward.

She was going herself down the slope to find her dead child. Dead he must be, for even the angels of God could only make the way of death less painful to him, since no human being could go down with the landslip and still live.

She laid aside her shawl and folded it upon her basket, and prepared to make the descent into the valley. The stones tore her hands and her naked feet. The bushes and spikes of asphodel swung back against her face and hurt her; but she cared for nothing. She only felt the fluttering touch of baby hands about her breast. She only heard the patter of little feet on the pavement of her memory. She could only feel the dewy, impetuous young lips pressed on hers in baby kisses.

She could lay his little body in the garden of God on the hill, but she could never afford to buy him a marble angel to place at the head of his little grave, such as the richer children have. And since they were so poor, even the ground in which they laid him would be wanted for another child in a few years' time.

She was almost halfway down the slope now, and the way that the landslip had taken was marked by broken trees and displaced

boulders. Some sand-martins that had nested among the stones were flying twittering round their broken homes, and Carmela pitied them out of the depths of her own sorrow.

Suddenly it came upon her with a flash that she could hear the voice of Toni calling her name, and she thought that it was the voice of her boy comforting her out of the arms of the good God.

"Oh, Toni, Toni mia," she sobbed, "take me with you to Paradise! My life—my heart—the very soul of me!"

At her right hand, jutting out from the surface of the rock, and untouched by the slip, was a mountain ash tree, with gnarled, firm branches, and in the hollow of the fork was a little bundle of scarlet. It was Toni, and Carmela, shaking in every limb, made her way down to him, and caught her child to her heart in a wild, passionate embrace.

"Toni—Toni! Oh, God, I thank Thee!"

She was sobbing and crying over him, and the child, a little bewildered and surprised, stretched up one small hand, and stroked her face, wet with happy tears.

"*Madre mia*, it was like flying—but my chickens are gone," he said.

"Never mind thy chickens, my baby! Thank the good God for thy whole body and unbroken limbs."

She crooned loving words over him, and then, with his lithe body close clasped in her arms, she fought her way up again and met Salvatore, her husband, on the little path, with the dying light of the sun about him, and bewildered fear and wonder in his face.

And so they kept holiday at the little farmstead on the morrow, and Toni was king of the feast, and clapped his hands as each successive firework shot up to the stars and the quiet night.

And his mother watched him with joy in her heart, and wonder, and silent thanksgiving.



